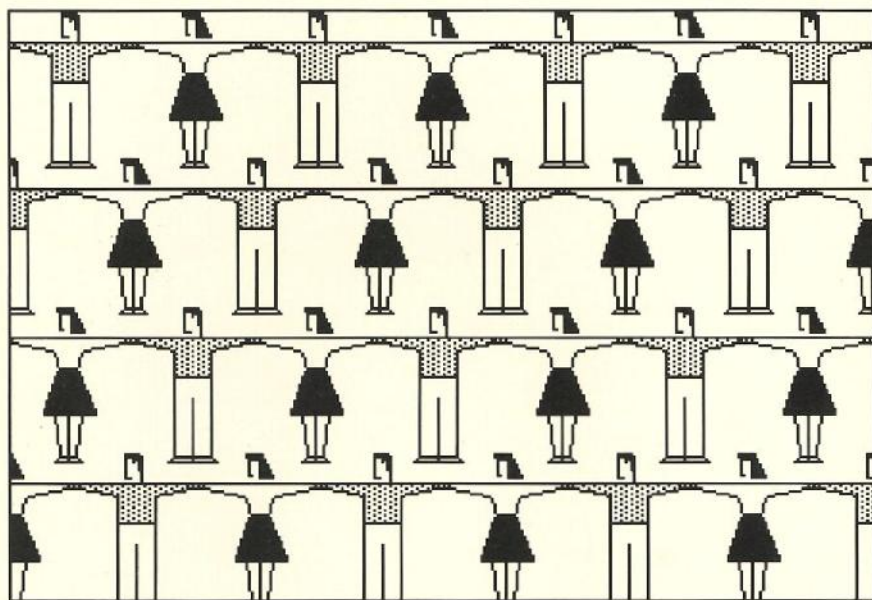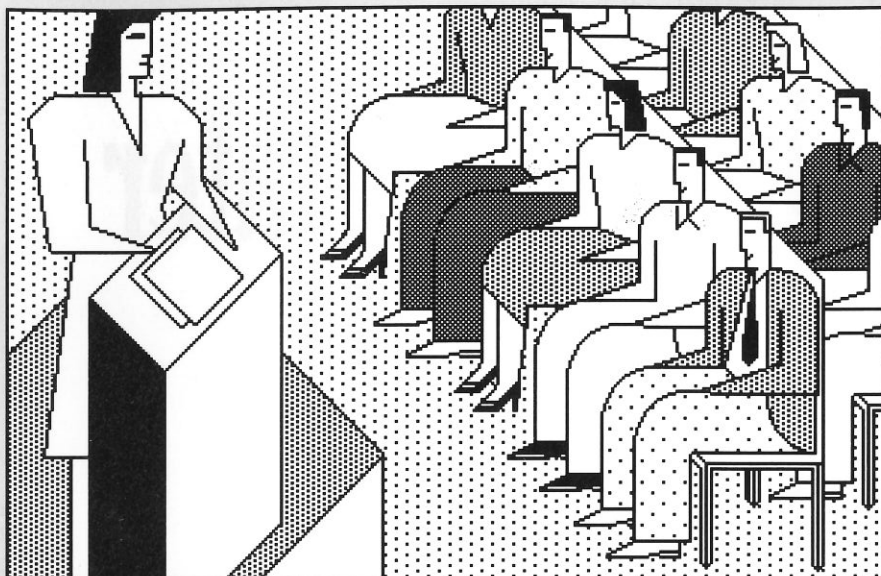# Just Add Water

Everything you always wanted to know about starting, sustaining, and enjoying an Apple User Group

Just Add Water

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USER GROUP
CONNECTION

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Preface

Since its founding in late 1985, the Apple User Group Connection—the group at Apple dedicated to supporting the exchange of information with User Groups—has received countless requests for assistance in creating and managing User Groups. How do we start a User Group? How do other groups keep their volunteers working? What should our relationship with local dealers be? How do we get developers to come to speak to us?

When Apple first started the Connection, inquiries came primarily from community-based computer users looking for additional support. Recently, however, the number of Apple dealers and field staff interested in helping a User Group get up and running has increased dramatically.

In addition, a growing number of people asking for help in starting a User Group are from corporations, government agencies, universities, and special interest areas. Educators, professionals, government workers—individuals from a wide range of backgrounds—want to know how to start a User Group in their geographical or interest area.

This guide is a starting point, providing the answers to some questions and pointing the direction to others. This book also offers guidance to existing groups: Even the most active, established organizations can benefit from exploring ways in which other groups approach similar challenges and services.

What's in This Guide

This publication is a compendium of information about how to start and maintain an Apple User Group. In it, you'll find hints on how to establish a User Group and how to promote, staff, and build the activities of that group. You'll find tips on newsletter production, on running elections, on getting developers to speak to your group and much more.

Our hope is that this information will move you past some of the roadblocks you may encounter in starting a new User Group, or offering new services within an existing User Group.

We have another hope for this publication: that it helps you take the next step for your organization, guiding you to additonal information on the subject of your choice. We especially want to direct you toward one very important information resource: AppleLink, Apple's on-line electronic network. All User Groups should participate in AppleLink. It offers the best means of getting technical information about Apple products and sharing insights with other Apple Users and supporters.

If you have comments regarding this publication or ideas or information you want to share with the User Group community, we encourage you to contact us or to post your information directly on one of the AppleLink networks.

You can write to the Apple User Group Connection at:

The Apple User Group Connection
Apple Computer, Inc.
20525 Mariani Avenue
Cupertino, CA 95014
AppleLink®: USER.GROUPS

Is a New Group the Right Approach?

Before you get started, make sure that reinventing the wheel is really what you want to do. It is surprising how often people well on their way to starting a User Group contact us, only to find that an existing organization is already active in their area. Many times, they choose simply to join the ongoing group, simplifying matters for everyone.

To find the User Group nearest you, call Apple's toll-free number for User Group referral—

800/538-9696 (Ext. 500)

—or request a copy of the User Group list from the Connection. You can also ask a local Apple dealer or look in local computer publications or in the "clubs and meetings" section of your local, campus, or company paper. Make sure to include nearby large cities in your search.

If a good group exists in a city nearby, but too far away for you to really get involved, look into forming an affiliated Special Interest Group, or SIG, of that organization. Becoming a SIG connects you with a larger, established group, yet lets you meet on your own schedule and in a location convenient to you. It also simplifies the steps in getting started: writing by-laws, setting up a bank account, planning a newsletter. Both community-oriented groups and private groups within corporations, government offices, universities, and special-applications areas may want to consider this option.

The Choice Is Up to You

Apple supports User Groups of any size, shape, interest area, or organizational structure. Its roster runs the gamut from a four-member group of Apple IIGS® enthusiasts in rural Ohio all the way to a 10,000-strong force of avid users in Washington, D.C. If associating with a larger User Group helps you satisfy the objectives of your members, do it. Otherwise, use the following pages as a guide to help you start a group on your own.

Whatever approach you choose, it should be an educational, rewarding, and above all, fun adventure for you and for all of your group's members.

Acknowledgments

All members of the User Group community have, in their own ways, contributed to this guide through their activities and their communications with Apple. We thank them for helping us share their experiences and insights with you.

Many individuals have made specific, invaluable contributions to this guide and to the body of knowledge reflected in it. Their names appear in this document. We offer special gratitude to them for their generosity.

1

Getting Started

So you're thinking of starting a User Group. Why? Did you happen into a pocket of Macintosh® computer users with the same interests and questions as you? Or did someone suggest that your expertise with the Apple® II computer would benefit the kids, parents, and teachers in your area? Or is everyone in your office clamoring with excitement—and intrigue—over the arrival of the new AppleTalk® network?

Whatever your interest, you're probably feeling what thousands before you have also felt: that the most important "accessory" you can connect to your computer are the people in your company, community, or interest area whose concerns and needs are like yours.

Making a User Group Happen

If you've decided to start your own User Group, congratulations—and you have your work cut out for you. Don't take the job lightly. Launching and running a User Group requires considerable time and effort. It may take some serious administrative overhead or even some financial backing. Before getting started, most groups agree that it's good to do some research to make sure you're really positioned for success.

If you're an individual who is thinking of going it alone, here's a piece of advice: Get help. Founding a User Group, whether in a business, community, or educational group, requires a large up-front effort.

Fortunately, finding help is usually easy. You may want to start by calling the nearest computer resellers—an authorized Apple dealer, campus bookstore, or other sales contact. See how these people respond to the idea of a local User Group: what they think interest would be, what they'd like the group to offer, how they'd like to get involved, and so on. Perhaps they'd like to participate in founding the group or becoming part of the staff—in helping the group take any of the first

NEW USER GROUP MEETING TONIGHT!
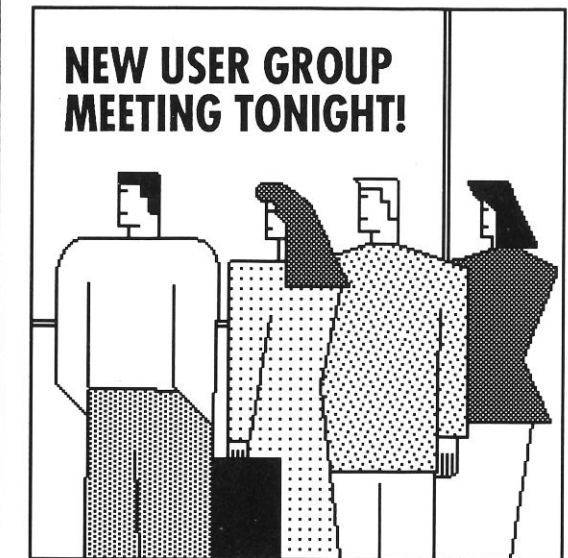
steps towards getting started.

You can also find help by advertising in a local computer publication or community newsletter, contacting a local community college's computer science department, getting air time (sometimes available at no charge for community-service messages) on a local radio station or community talk show, or placing a notice on company or community bulletin boards. Chances are, there's someone out there who is thinking along the same lines as you. Maybe they, too, are looking for some help.

Apple's View of User Groups

Apple defines a User Group as an affiliation of Apple users dedicated to enhancing the use of their Apple systems by sharing information, support, and insights with each other.

This is an intentionally broad definition. Apple User Groups exist for every product Apple has ever made and for every application for which these products are used. A User Group might reside in a corporation, government agency, university, professional association, school system, national organization, or residential community.

What do these diverse groups have in common—what makes them Apple User Groups? The answer is their *educational* objective. User Groups act as educational forces exploring information about applications, products, services, and other opportunities.

Generally speaking, User Groups are not for profit, a status that may be officially recognized by the IRS or that simply may be the de facto mode of operation. Apple does not recognize organizations formed as profit-making entities or for the financial benefit of any individuals as User Groups. Any benefits or resources gained by User Group activity must be for the good of all members of the group, not for the benefit of specific individuals.

User Groups may be public or private, but they should not exclude any individuals from participating, regardless of product interest or ownership. Groups formed in communities are almost always

public. Nonmembers should be able to attend meetings or participate in other group events, at least on an introductory basis. Groups operating within corporations, agencies, universities, or other organizations may by definition be private, but they shouldn't exclude members based on computer ownership or preference.

These guidelines are not just Apple's preferences. They reflect IRS rules for determining nonprofit status as well as the rules of many corporations and universities for any internally sanctioned club.

There is one guideline regarding User Groups that Apple holds sacred: *Any User Group wishing to be recognized by Apple must support the licenses and restrictions applicable to commercial software.*

It is both illegal and unethical for any person, whether a User Group member or not, to copy software without authorization. User Groups should take

> **64% of all Apple User Groups offer some sort of member training.**
>
> **73% of all Apple User Groups anticipate membership growth over the next 12 months.**
>
> **68% of all User Group members regularly attend monthly meetings.**
>
> **73% of all existing Apple User Groups see membership on the rise.**
>
> **40% of all Apple User Groups offer product training or support to nonmembers.**

responsibility for educating their members about the piracy issue and should not allow the unethical practices of any member to damage a group's reputation.

Planning Ahead

What services will your User Group offer to its members? These should be decided and planned in advance. Following is a list of services many groups offer. No User Group offers all of the services mentioned here on day one, but it's a good idea to have your objectives in mind so you can plan the activities needed to launch them as your group grows.

Meetings: The regularly-scheduled gatherings that bring the people of your User Group together, usually to discuss products, share questions and answers, and communicate information about the status of the group.

Newsletters: The written notes, brief or elaborate, that share messages with all members and supporters, including those who can't attend meetings.

Technical support: The sharing of technical knowledge and insights among users with common interests; the lifeblood of User Group activity and what may have got you to think about starting a group in the first place.

Product reviews: Real-life assessments of products, including applications, computers, and associated hardware.

Training and orientation: The actual teaching part of User Group activity; training can be formal or informal, group oriented or one on one.

Public domain software: Freely distributable applications, templates, games,

HyperCard® stacks, and other software shared generally among User Groups or on on-line networks.

Resource centers: A common office or group area for the User Group, often in a member's home, a local library, or even a computer retail site.

Bulletin board systems: An on-line network that allows members to communicate through their computers, a modem, and telephone lines.

Dealer and developer tie-in: The opportunity to address groups of customers through User Group activity offers some great advantages to third parties like developers and dealers. These parties can then address users as a connected enclave rather than just as individuals. Because they represent a community of users, User Groups can often attract attention, and benefits, that individuals can not. This offers advantages to both the third parties and the members of the User Group.

What Should Your Bylaws Cover?

Rules, Rules, Rules . . . What is your group really all about? What is its mission, its audience? How is it run, and how does it operate? These are some of the questions to be addressed by your group's bylaws— the foundation of your ongoing operations and activities.

One good place to go for help with these questions is to a set of existing User Group bylaws. Many User Groups willingly share them upon request. Look to these resources for more guidance in setting up your code of ethics. You can

Growing a User Group

by Dick Hubert
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AppleLink®: UG0006

You need a purpose for forming a group. Our group was founded in 1978 to share and expand a very meager amount of information on what were then these new and potentially useful computers. There were no experts. The computers were available to anybody who had $1,500 to spend. You had to be a little crazy to buy one. But the Apple II had something unique: a monitor. Early on, we used the information we shared to develop better software and particularly tools.

Today there are many more reasons for people to join User Groups. Information sharing is still important, but the social aspects have risen in importance. Now the User Groups are a clearing house for the volumes of information available. The User Groups help people sift this information so they can use it. Our group has formalized this function through full-fledged monthly magazines and a cooperative buying service in which the staff tries to select products that we ourselves would want to use.

The areas of interest that people may have now are as varied as the microcomputer industry itself. My guess is that you could get enough people to form a User Group for any given specialized topic. Certainly nationally, if one is willing to do the searching and coordination, there's probably no topic that you couldn't find enough folks to build a group for. Today specialized interests range from genealogy to computer-aided design to specific programming tools such as MacApp®. The vast amount of information even about each machine type is far beyond the ken of any one individual or even any one group of people.

The opportunity for people to get together to talk about their interests is very important. This is at least as important as the formal program portion of a meeting. It is in the informal discussions that people find others who share their precise interests. More and more people continue their discussion via bulletin board systems, and we expect that this activity will grow.

### The Do's and Don'ts of Starting a User Group

When you form a User Group, you really need to incorporate, to formalize the legal entity of which you are a part, and you need to set areas of responsibility. The guidelines are usually set forth in a formal constitution. We have one that we've developed over the years that we'd be happy to provide to anyone that wants it.

Contact us at the above address if you're interested.

Summary of the Necessaries

Here is a summary of tasks our experience has shown to be necessary to the success of a User Group. To get started, a User Group will need to:
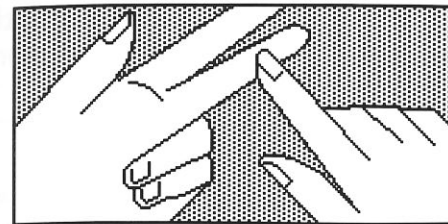
- Identify the purpose of group.
- Get critical mass of people.
- Incorporate.
- Use the technology.
- Grow with care.
- Use professional accounting services.
- Renew the people to avoid burnout.

As your plans take shape, keep these steps in mind:

Choose temporary officers. Identify a recorder, a presiding officer, a promotional officer, a dealer-relations officer, and other supporters to help you get started. Agree to a definition of each officer's responsibilities and the time frames in which tasks should be completed.

Choose a temporary name. What word, phrase, or abbreviation best describes the spirit and purpose of your User Group? Choose a name and use it. But before you establish a permanent name, read the section "What's in a Name?" later in this chapter.

Create a committee to begin work on the bylaws. The bylaws will be the framework of your User Group. Before going too far, though, you might want to get in touch with an established group and ask if the group will share a copy of its bylaws with you. Most groups are willing to do this. You'll find this head start will give you a tremendous planning advantage. ∎

also check with your local library to find any other organizations in your community that have established bylaws. Charitable groups, hobby groups, and others may offer some valuable frameworks that will save you time in the long run.

Developing good bylaws requires experience and some knowledge about your community that you might not intuitively have. Get help from others who have already been through this process.

The First Meeting

Once you've taken these preliminary steps, it's time to start thinking about your first User Group gathering. Again, don't try to go it alone. Find a few kindred spirits to plan the first general meeting. Following are some pointers.

Test the waters. Get an idea of how many people might be interested in joining your

group. Consider placing an ad in a local paper or on a local radio station to get some publicity. Community organizations can often obtain ad space for free. Include in your ad some action that interested parties should take—phoning you, for example—and keep track of the responses to gain some insight into the potential for your budding organization.

Signs or flyers also attract attention. Think about strategic locations—places that your target members are most likely to look and that will draw the most attention to your meetings. The window of a cooperative dealership, for example, is an ideal location for a sign. Work with the dealer to ensure that the sign is appealing to his or her customers and in keeping with the store's image.

You can also place posters or flyers in a strategic place on a campus or in your workplace. Many companies and schools have bulletin boards, electronic networks, or other communications mechanisms that can help you spread the word.

Set a date and time. Most User Groups meet once a month for about two hours. Set your first meeting at a time and day that makes sense for the members you want to

Bylaws are the code that will allow your group to make decisions and move ahead in a changing environment. In many ways, User Group bylaws should be similar to those of any other other organization. The trick is to make rules that anticipate the User Group's growth and future needs.

To do that, think about:
- What is the mission of your group?
- Who are your potential members?
- Who are the decision makers in your group?
- How do you define the activities of your group?
- How do you appoint, elect, and replace officers?
- What is your stance on software protection?
- How do you manage your financial or physical holdings?
- What city, county, or state laws must you conform to?
- How will you handle state or federal taxes?
- How do you deal with change? Growth? Shifts in direction?
- If it comes to it, how should the group be officially disbanded? What happens to holdings in case of dissolution?

attract. If you're planning an in-house group within a corporation or agency, what time makes the most sense? One lunch hour per month? At a school, would it be easier to plan meetings after normal school hours or in the evenings? In a

community, are you more likely to get participation in the evenings or, say, on a Saturday morning? Conduct an informal survey to find out what time might work best for prospective members. Whatever the case, most User Groups evolve toward a regularly identifiable meeting date—say, the first Tuesday of each month—and a fixed time. You should consider that long-term plan as you organize your first gathering.

Find a meeting place. Space for User Group meetings can be found in a variety of places, including:
- School auditoriums
- Church halls
- Lodge-type club space. (Traditional men's and women's clubs often have space that can be reserved for other clubs.)
- Public libraries
- Dealerships: training rooms, common areas
- Corporations: lunchrooms, meeting rooms, auditoriums
- Chamber of commerce offices
- Universities. Rooms or computer lab space often is available at low cost, even for community groups.
- Hotels, if your group is large enough. (At least one hotel provides space free to a business-oriented community group, knowing that the group's members can potentially influence their company's choices of paid meeting space for conferences.)

The ideal meeting place should have comfortable chairs in the center and room for displays around the edges and should be equipped with audiovisual equipment. Also consider parking, access to public transportation, and safety, especially if your meetings are to be held at night.

Try to get a long-term commitment from both your members and the scheduler of the room. Try to book your location for four to six months or even longer if that option is available to you. (If you're planning a community or education-oriented User Group, consider skipping one or two of the summer months. Many groups tell us that member participation wanes during this time of the year.)

Plan the agenda with time allotments. Include both business topics—that is, information pertaining to the group and its direction—and technical subject matter. Here is a suggested agenda for your first meeting:
- Why start a User Group? Include input, even quotations, from a variety of potential members.
  15 minutes
- What should the group be named?
  15 minutes
- A report from the bylaws committee.
  15 minutes
- A special event: a technical presentation, developer product review, product overview from a local dealer, product demonstration, or other substantial, computer-oriented presentation. This should be the real meat of the meeting.
  40 minutes

- Questions and answers (with answers, as well as questions, coming from the audience). If questions can't be answered on the spot, someone from the organizing committee might take responsibility for finding an answer by the next meeting.
  20 minutes
- Plan the next meeting, ideally at a regularly-scheduled time.
  15 minutes

Publicize the next meeting. Advertise again to get the word out to more interested people. Be sure to contact anyone who responded to your initial outreach but who did not attend the first meeting.

What's in a Name?

Before you get too far along, you'll probably want to name your group.

A rose by any other name would probably smell as sweet. But imagine how much less romantic a love poem would be if roses were, instead, called aardvarks. Similarly, your group's moniker sets the stage for what your group will mean to your members. Give it some thought and put your most creative friends on the project. Staging a small contest—maybe involving a local high school or college creative writing or advertising class—might be a way to generate some original concepts.

Acronyms, usually ending in *UG*, take the cake for most popular name for a User Group. But there are advantages and disadvantages to being one of a number of User Groups sharing the same name. Develop a name that sticks, one that reflects the geographic, regional, product, application, or experiential flavor of your group. Then review the User Group Connection database to see if anyone else in your immediate vicinity or interest area is using the same name. The more distinctive your name, the better you will stand out in your community and among the growing number of User Groups active in the Connection.

Just for fun, here is a list of some of the more creative names from the Connection's User Group database:
- University Macintosh Enlightenment Society (Edison, NJ)
- Mini'apples User Group (Minneapolis, MN)
- AMIGOS (Fort Valley, GA)
- De Mac® Users Group (Deland, FL)
- MUGOO: Macintosh Users Group of Orlando (Orlando, FL)
- The Rest of Us (Chicago, IL)
- The Mackey Mouse Club (Lincoln, NE)
- HAAUG: Houston Area Apple User's Group (Houston, TX)

> "We wanted something that really showed the spirit of the kind of group we wanted to start, so we started flipping through the dictionary. Suddenly, we found the Latin word *Nexus*. The definition worked for us: the tie, link, or bond among members of a group. That seemed so symbolic to us—so we called ourselves the Mac-Nexus User Group. We explain this origin in every newsletter because it's not a term that people are generally familiar with."
>
> **Gail McGovern**
> **President, MacNexus**
> **User Group**
> **Sacramento, CA**
> **AppleLink: UG0003**

- The Mouseketeer Macintosh User Group (Houston, TX)
- The Click Clique (Midland, TX)
- Applequerque Computer Club (Albuquerque, NM)
- A LA Mac (Los Angeles, CA)
- The Zoom Squad (Hesperia, CA)
- Appleholics Anonymous (Ventura, CA)
- ShowPage Macintosh User Group (San Francisco, CA)
- Mad Macs: Beyond ThunderScan (San Francisco, CA)
- SPCA: Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Apples (Fremont, CA)
- dBUG: downtown Business Users Group (Seattle, WA)

A good name does not have to be catchy. The "Amateur Radio Computer Users of Massachusetts" does a great job of telling prospective members what the group is all about. So do the "Pentagon Macintosh Users Group" and the "Caspar Area Apple User Group." The most important consideration is that the name makes sense to your members, and says a little about what your group is.

User Groups often ask, "What can we do to help Apple?" We hope you will understand that using the Apple name according to the specifications called for it is one of the most supportive, helpful things you can do for us.

Apple legally controls references to the trademarks "Apple," "Macintosh," and so on. If you choose to incorporate one of these trademarks into your group's name, Apple asks you to clarify your meaning by adding the words "User Group." Furthermore, realize that cute adaptations of Apple's trademarks can be confusing or misleading to the people who use Apple products.

If you do decide to use or interpret the name Apple or the name of Apple products, you should first review Apple's User Group Trademark Guidelines, which we will send you on request. It specifies, "Generally, Apple does not allow any variations or take-offs on the Apple name. Names such as 'A-PEL' are misleading. Apple reserves the right to control the use of the Apple name."

Remember that your use of Apple trademarks is legally subject to Apple's discretion. If you have any questions at all, you should contact Apple's trademark group at

Apple Computer, Inc.
20525 Mariani Avenue
Cupertino, CA 95014

Attn: Software Licensing
AppleLink: SW.LICENSE

Your compliance with Apple's trademark standards will strengthen your relationship with Apple and help protect Apple's creative and intellectual property.

Staffing Up

What officers does your group need? Determining this will be an important step, one that will play an important role in the evolution of your User Group. You don't, however, need to establish all positions at the start of your group. Good

advice for ramp-up time is: Take one step at a time and don't move beyond the actual needs of your group. Determine the baseline services you want and have the resources to establish. Then set up appropriate positions and appoint officers to fill them.

The posts within User Groups can include
• President
• Vice-presidents
• Directors, trustees, advisors
• Secretary
• Treasurer
• Newsletter editor
• Assistant editor
• Publications manager
• Publicity chair
• Equipment coordinator
• Dealer-relations manager
• Meeting coordinator
• Apple "Ambassador" (or key contact)
• Bulletin board system operator

Although many of these positions apply primarily to large public groups (and ones that are well established), most of the responsibilities are applicable to private groups such as those in business and educational settings.

Where to find staff. To find volunteers for staff positions, recruit at meetings and in newsletters. Turn to computer users in local business or educational organizations and in computer-related retailers. If someone complains at a User Group gathering, sign that person up to do something about his or her concern. Retired people, people who work from home, even people who don't use computers (yet!), all may be potential staff members.

Don't be shy about asking anyone to get involved in the group. Be encouraging, inspiring, warm and welcoming—communicate your enthusiasm for the potential of the group. Not everyone will be able to make a commitment, but those who do will help your group grow and develop.

For further information about meetings, people, and all of the things a new User Group has to look forward to, turn to Chapter 2.

Building a Member Organization

A User Group is an organization comprised of *members*. Most User Groups limit their benefits—meetings, publications, access to public-domain software, technical support—to registered members of the group. The majority of

> "A group should have four or five front people in charge of each of its major components (meetings, newsletter editorial, newsletter production, software library, etc.). There should also be one to three directors who oversee the front people."
>
> **The Boston Computer Society's Manual for User Groups and Special Interest Groups**

Special Notes for Groups in Higher Education

by Joanne Larrabee
MIT Macintosh Users Group
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77 Massachusetts Avenue, Building 11, 3rd Floor, Cambridge, MA 02139
AppleLink: UG0084

Universities have a tradition of sharing information. The community trades news and ideas through academic journals, college newspapers, campus lectures, and scholarly seminars. For campus users and architects of computers and software, university-based User Groups continue this tradition of information exchange.

As a means of providing computing assistance and education, User Groups are invaluable. Some schools have, in fact, established collaborative programs between User Groups and the institution's formal computer support system. Both organizations have a common mission: providing computing help, education, and services. Working together they can extend the depth and breadth of this support beyond what either could offer individually. User Groups give a campus an informal computing support staff many times larger than the full-time staff funded by the university. The result is that help is more widely available. A broader support community also means that assistance can be both more specialized and more diverse. The computing center can, in turn, help User Groups by offering services to them: meeting space, equipment loans, administration of membership and mailing lists, storage, space, computing time, newsletter publicity and bulletin board displays, electronic bulletin board accounts, and similar resources.

A campus-based User Group can also be an effective lobbying force. With a unified effort, a group can influence vendors' product offerings and suggest product features. A request from an individual may not encourage companies to develop products for laboratory or classroom use, but a request from a User Group may. A User Group can also influence on-campus decisions about computing equipment and services by calling attention to the needs and opinions of its members. It can be an advocate for site licenses and volume discounts, computing standards, documentation and reference libraries, output and production services, public computing access, computer education and training, or other services that benefit the entire institution.

User Groups can play a role in the intellectual life of a university, serving as a classroom for those who use computers and as a laboratory for those who program or design them. Computing ideas can be articulated and designs can be examined at User Group
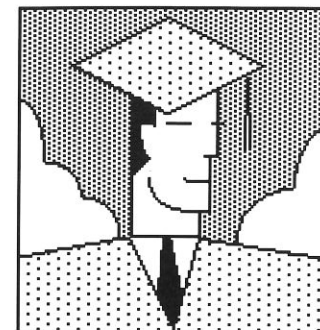
public User Groups charge an annual fee, or subscription, for membership—anywhere from $8 to $35.

meetings. Campus User Groups, with their ready access to programmers, engineers, and computing machinery and their eagerness to use new technologies, are among the first to see new developments in computing, as hardware and software creators like to show such groups their latest and most experimental products. Thus, campus User Groups often have access to the cutting edge of computer technology.

Many of the most vital and active User Groups have links to a university community. They benefit from the resources of the host institutions: interested members, meeting facilities, and organizational help. In turn, they contribute to the faculty, students, staff, and neighborhoods from which their membership is drawn, extending assistance, guiding decisions, and providing a forum for people interested in computing. ∎

Some groups declare their meetings public, letting anyone participate, and charge a membership fee only to those people who subscribe to the group's newsletter. Of course, meetings are a place for building membership, and any purchases (such as public-domain software) might be at a premium for nonmembers.

Some groups allow nonmembers to attend and evaluate one or two meetings before asking them to officially join. One group assigns potential new members buddies to help them assess their needs and reasons for joining, to sit with them through a meeting, and then to clarify for them the benefits of becoming a member.

For business User Groups, publicity within the company or agency is as important to ongoing success as it is for a public group in the community. In-house newsletters, messages on intraoffice E-mail systems, or snappy, desktop-published flyers not only promote an in-house User Group, but may help establish it as "official" in management's eye. This internal visibility is carefully nurtured by those in-house groups that have discovered its benefits.

One final comment on building membership. While you and your volunteers are working hard locally to build visibility, remember that Apple is working nationally in support of your efforts. Apple generates flyers, videotapes, in-box promotional materials, and other materials expressly for communicating the

by Captain Steve Broughall
President, Pentagon Macintosh Users Group
1225 Walter Street, SE, Washington, DC 20003
AppleLink: UG0120

First, let me state at the beginning that the Pentagon Macintosh User Group (PMUG) is not an official Department of Defense (DOD) organization and the following thoughts do not necessarily reflect DOD policy. Now that I've gotten that out of the way, I'd like to talk about Macintosh User Groups (MUGs) in government facilities.

In my experience, there are usually two types of federal government MUGs: type A, groups that have Macintosh computers in the workplace, and type B, groups that don't. First, the virtues of type A.

To be fully successful, you need at least some Macintosh systems installed in the organization. This allows the MUG to receive official blessing. In fact, a DOD "End-User Computing Policy" memo specifically advocates and supports the formation of User Groups. Let me know if you need a copy.

User Groups are a powerful resource that can be utilized by both the information management crowd and, more importantly, the functional users. They're a great, low cost (like almost zero cost) method for shortening the learning curve (granted, already short). They provide free in-house training and systems integration services for Macintosh users. The bottom line is User Groups save the government money.

Getting official recognition for your internal User Group is extremely useful in attending to the logistics of running an organization within an orgranizaton. It allows you to obtain meeting space, reproduce materials, use government-owned computers, distribute newsletters, and gain access to numerous other government services and facilities. Another good reason to obtain official recognition is to allow meetings to extend into "company time." PMUG holds its meetings at lunch time, with sessions extending into work time for those who can afford it. Learning to improve your skill with the Macintosh is job related if you use a Macintosh for work.

It is essential to remember that a government User Group exists to help both the members and the government agency. A government group can play an extremely useful role as an information exchange network, and learning to use computer systems more effectively and efficiently benefits everyone involved.

To have productive and interesting meetings, discussion topics should be
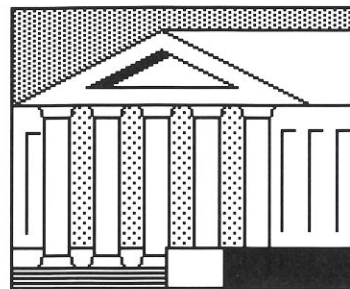
determined by the members' desires and the needs of the agency, depending on how work-oriented the group's mission is. For example, if everyone at the agency is going to receive new modems next month, Macintosh telecommunications would certainly be a timely meeting topic. A presentation could be given by expert members or by experienced vendors or dealers. (Note, though, that a vendor will present only the company's own product, so you might want to bring in several vendors at one time to compare their products. Also, remember that a User Group cannot obligate the federal government to buy anything—that can only be done by warranted contracting officers within the agency. If you are in doubt about working with vendors, check with your contracting office. Generally, we at PMUG have not encountered any difficulties in arranging product demonstrations.

If you are not lucky enough to have a Macintosh in your workplace, you're a type B, and the road ahead may be a little more difficult. Your group's orientation then must be, by necessity, that of a recreational or hobbyist group, much like a ski or photography club. Procedures for forming this type of group are well established within most agencies.

Of course, a government User Group may have both type A and type B within its membership. Even if some workers have Macintosh computers on their desks, not everyone may (though many may have one at home, and a lucky few may use a Macintosh both at work and at home). There is no reason why a User Group can't cater to both.

In an era of budget cutting, User Groups make good sense. They allow the government to get the most out of its computer resources at the lowest cost possible while providing an enjoyable experience for the members involved. ∎

benefits of User Group involvement to new customers. Therefore, it is of primary importance that the information you give Apple to aid in these referrals is completely accurate and up to date.

An excellent exploration of User Group volunteerism can be found in the Boston Computer Society's *Manual for User*

Groups and Special Interest Groups. This manual is available to User Groups through the BCS office. Contact them at:

The Boston Computer Society
One Center Plaza
Boston, MA 02108
AppleLink: UG0097

2

Keeping People Connected

Chapter 2

The essence of User Groups is communication. This chapter details ways in which successful User Groups have structured and delivered four important communication services.

- Meetings
- Newsletters
- Public-domain software
- Bulletin board systems

Organizing Effective Meetings

When computer User Groups first started appearing a decade ago, successful, exciting meetings were virtually guaranteed. Most users were advanced hobbyists who spent many hours exploring their computer's capabilities. Everyone had information to give and to get.

Running a User Group today is far more challenging. Leaders must deal with an eclectic group of people: beginners who need help getting started, experienced users with advanced interests, and even people who need answers to specific application-oriented questions.

As a result, running successful meetings today takes energy and organization. Although there's no specific format, leaders of effective User Group meetings have offered the following suggestions.

Serve varying levels of expertise. Meetings must serve beginners by presenting easy-to-understand information, but without patronizing advanced members. This is one of the toughest parts of running a User Group.

Ideas for achieving diversity include alternating between technical and general meeting presentations, emphasizing breakout sessions or special interest meetings, or designating neophyte and technical discussion time within each meeting agenda.

Present both ideas and specific answers. User Groups serve two broad purposes: to help users discover the full potential of their computers and to help users solve their specific problems. The first purpose is accomplished through interesting talks and demonstrations of applications and new products—helping users understand what can be done with their computers and keeping them abreast of new developments. The second is accomplished by small groups that identify people's problems and help them find solutions.

Balance structured and unstructured time. User Group meetings need some structure to ensure that the audience gets solid, usable information. But meetings must also give attendees time to get to the information they need personally. To this end, meetings should captivate and involve the audience, should never be pure lecture, and should have a good mix of participatory and nonparticipatory events.

Meeting size has a significant bearing on format. Smaller meetings can be less structured and more personalized. Larger meetings need structure to prevent chaos, but can also break more easily into subgroups to focus on specific interests. Keep these points in mind, because your group may change in size over time.

Choose diverse and appropriate meeting topics. Meetings should discuss diverse applications areas to the home, business,

and school. Some meeting topics should be fun and entertaining, and others should be challenging and provide detailed information. The point of a meeting that presents a specific topic in great depth is that it will attract members who are interested in that subject. By covering a broad range of topics during the year, you'll continue to attract new people to meetings. As a result, each meeting will have an interesting and unique flavor. But don't overdo the topical approach. Be sure to present many kinds of information at each meeting.

Be sensitive to meeting topics at any surrounding User Groups, as some people may attend multiple meetings. Consider checking with neighboring groups when setting up your group's agenda.

Create group cohesion. Like it or not, some groups break up into cliques, which can be less than welcoming to newcomers. User Groups should take every measure to prevent this situation. Newcomers are what keeps a User Group alive and growing. Including new members in discussion groups, and taking special steps to help them participate ensures growth and vitality in a User Group.

Some groups combat the tendency to separate newcomers from established members by assigning a mentor, or special guide, to every new User Group member. This gives the newcomer enhanced access to the group and helps the "old timer" remember the time when he or she was just starting out. This approach has proven successful in both small and large User Groups.

Adapt to change. Even if you're currently running large, successful meetings, they probably won't be large forever. Many successful groups have eroded into skeletons of what they once were. This phenomenon, which some call "group stagnancy," can recur periodically in a group's life. Groups need to plan for change, offering new services, special events, and other new activities to keep existing members interested and to attract new members. Like the personal computer industry itself, members' needs evolve quickly, and groups must stay on top of this evolution.

To keep apprised of new ideas, consider visiting other User Group meetings. Exchange ideas and advice, and both of you will benefit.

Plan the agenda for each meeting. Make an agenda with time allotments. You want to make sure a meeting is packed with information, but you also don't want to have people sit too long. Two hours should be the maximum length for a general meeting. If you need more time than this, treat Special Interest Group (SIG) sessions as separate events. Think through your agenda and then stick to it, and you'll make the best use of participants' time.

In preparing your agenda, be sure to provide a variety of activities for your meeting. Following is a list of suggestions, in the order in which they might appear on your agenda. You can use any or all of these components in your meeting—or add your own. Most groups find certain sequences work best. You may want to

compare notes with other group organizers.

Demonstrations. Demonstrations are essential to a good meeting. A User Group meeting without computers is like a baseball game without a baseball. Demonstrations of new software, peripherals, accessories, and member-written programs always go over well. Demonstrations should be set up so attendees don't just watch, but can also try them. Make sure at least one appropriate computer is available at each meeting.

Many groups ask local dealers to bring equipment to User Group meetings, showcasing their products and knowledge for meeting attendees. A representative of your group should provide a meeting schedule to local resellers and then call dealers seven to ten days before the meeting to offer table space. Some groups charge a nominal fee or request the donation of a door prize for this floorspace. However, bear in mind that the dealer is making an investment of time simply in attending your meeting. Work out arrangements so that all parties feel like winners.

Announcements. Most User Groups plan some time for announcements at monthly meetings. During this time, attendees announce items they want to buy or sell, news of interest to the group, or services they're trying to find. They may also want to raise questions or discuss products they've used. This is an excellent opportunity for members to take advantage of the group's collective resources. Some groups schedule

announcements first, allowing speakers to become familiar with the group and members' level of technical knowledge.

To keep the announcements portion of your meetings under control, keep all announcements under one minute each, and, when multiple responses arrive, suggest respondents get together after the meeting rather than talk back and forth in front of the group.

Question-and-answer sessions. As with announcements, many groups schedule question-and-answer session before the speaker. Some even have a session at the beginning of the meeting and one at the midpoint. This gives people who cannot stay for the entire meeting a chance to get answers to their questions.

Again, as with announcements, don't let this activity get out of hand. If questions are too esoteric or too technial, suggest that attendees talk later one-on-one to the person with the answer.

A speaker—a general-interest talk. Remember: You have a diverse audience, so a talk can't be too strongly committed to one level of expertise. Generally, talks about new products and interesting applications work best. You can usually get dealers, manufacurers, and members to present talks.

Experience has shown that guest speakers tend not to live up to expectations. You can, however, take steps to improve their—and your— chances of success. Select speakers carefully, interviewing each one beforehand if possible. Make sure they understand your goals and guidelines.

Chapter 2

Impress upon your guest speakers the need to keep their presentations short and to spend more time demonstrating than talking.

Here's a rule of thumb for speakers: If you have one speaker, the time limit should be 30 minutes, plus 5 to 10 minutes for questions; for two speakers, the time limit should be 20 minutes each, plus questions. With multiple speakers, you probably have a better chance of pleasing most of the audience. But don't forget that the audience has a shorter attention span than you might think. If people begin to get edgy, squirm in their seats, cough, whisper to each other, and fall asleep, chances are, the speaker is talking too long. Be sensitive to your audience and save them from needless boredom. Be tough and cut off speakers when you detect these signs.

Brief business segment. Plan a business segment to keep members up to date on group happenings, to announce future meetings and projects, and to encourage people to volunteer. Try to keep this segment punchy, upbeat, and no longer than 10 minutes.

Breakout sessions. Use small-group breakout sessions to address attendees' specific needs. Survey members to find out what topics they want addressed in small groups (some examples: computing for beginners, computer hardware, graphics, word processing, business software, education, kids, and programming). You must have a leader for each group. Choose leaders in advance so that they can be prepared to get people involved in the discussions and to help them get the answers they need. It's helpful to hang signs around the room to identify the topics of the various groups. Encourage attendees to visit more than one group.

Five cardinal rules for a successful meeting. Following are five rules that, if you follow them, should increase the likelihood of a successful meeting.

Pack each meeting with information. If every attendee leaves your meeting feeling he or she has learned much useful, concrete information, you've succeeded marvelously. Meetings should be packed with a diverse selection of reviews, commentary, instruction, and discussion. People want facts they can put to practical use, not shallow pontifications or rambling dialogues.

Keep it short. Although you may be having a great time running the meeting, your audience might be on the verge of insanity. Keep the formal meeting as brief as possible (preferably 60 to 90 minutes). Leave people feeling they want more. Give them plenty of time to interact with each other, talk to the speakers, and try out the demonstrations.

Involve the audience. Members will feel like part of the group and will be more likely to contribute to it if you make them feel involved. Encourage comments from the audience. Encourage people to meet each other. Meetings should be fun.

Eschew jargon. Most computer jargon is unnecessary and terrorizes beginners when used at meetings. Some terms may be okay, but in general, "computerese" (including obscure product names) should be avoided or explained. If you must use a term that might be unfamiliar to any

What Is a SIG?

by Cheryl Jencks
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AppleLink: D0053

A Special Interest Group (SIG) is a group of members of a computer User Group who share a common interest in a specific type of program or application or a common level of experience in using the computer. SIGs usually meet once a month for a few hours and provide a forum for members to share experiences, problems, solutions, and tips.

What does a SIG leader do? The leader of a SIG is often, but not necessarily, someone who is experienced in the subject of the SIG. The leader notifies members of the time and place of meetings, sets the agenda for each meeting, and facilitates the exchange of ideas. Each SIG leader conducts meetings in a different way, depending on his or her own personality and the needs and desires of the group. In some SIG meetings, the leader may actually teach a class, but this is an exception rather than the rule.

What can I expect at a SIG meeting? SIG meetings are generally made up of people with all levels of experience unless they are directed at a particular level (for example, at beginners or intermediate users). The leader often may demonstrate new programs or techniques, and a lot of time will be spent on questions and answers. Answers are not necessarily provided by the group leader; but are often (even usually) contributed or worked out by other members of the group. This give and take between members is one of the most valuable benefits of participation in a SIG.

What SIGs does Club Mac currently offer? Our group offers the following SIGs:

Beginners: For those new to the Macintosh or to computers in general. This group focuses on the Finder, file and folder management, and installing fonts and desk accessories.

Intermediate: For users with a basic proficiency, but who need help with hard disk management, file and resource utilities, and individual applications.

Programming: For intermediate and expert programmers or those interested in programming. This group emphasizes the C language.

Microsoft Word: For users who want to focus on this complex and powerful word processing program.

Desktop Publishing (DTP): For users who want tips and techniques for using the major DTP programs.

HyperCard: Our most popular SIG. This group explores the amazingly flexible HyperCard; how to use it and how to program it.

See page 4 of the *Club Mac of Monterey Journal* for times, places, and group leaders of each SIG. ■

members of the audience, be sure to define it clearly.

Welcome newcomers. Most people who attend a User Group meeting for the first time never return, usually because they are not made to feel comfortable.

Put yourself in the newcomer's shoes. You don't know anyone, you're not sure what to expect. New members should find things and people to help them get involved right away. There should be literature to read, demonstrations to try out, and friendly people with whom to talk. Most of all, there should be a light, cordial atmosphere that is considerate of first-timers.

Newcomers are the heart of a User Group. They bring in new perspectives, help the group evolve, are an excellent source of volunteer help, and combat stagnancy. Make new people feel welcome by having established members greet newcomers. Ask newcomers to raise their hands if it's their first meeting. Find out what brought them to the meeting and direct them to regular members so they can meet during a break.

> **After-meeting get-togethers are common, but they often suffer from "clique-itis." Be sensitive to newcomers and be sure to include them in any post-meeting activity. Newcomers like to eat pizza too!**

Preparing the meeting place for your group. On the day of the meeting, you need to prepare the scene. Part of this preparation includes providing a clearly marked path with signs to the meeting room. One of the most distressing experiences for newcomers is getting lost looking for the meeting. Use an abundance of directional signs at the meeting site.

Also make sure beforehand that you have all your supplies. Do you have enough electrical outlets, extension cords, tables, projector bulbs, video displays, connector cords? It's a good idea to run through these things in your mind before leaving for the meeting. Do not assume some particular preparation has been done, just because it always gets done. Make a checklist and use it.

Hosting Special Events

A special event can be nothing more than a regular meeting with a few bells and whistles added or with a special guest speaker featured. A well-promoted event once or twice a year will attract a good crowd of people and will keep them interested in the group.

Publishing a Newsletter

Next to meetings, newsletters are probably the most common—and useful—services User Groups provide. Groups circulate news about applications, innovations, custom software, and other information pertinent to members.

All types of User Groups produce newsletters. About 80 percent produce some sort of newsletter on a monthly (or

sometimes less frequent) basis. The need for a newsletter is usually greatest in larger groups, especially community groups with widespread membership and diverse interests. Newsletters range from 2 to 200 pages in length and include the full gamut of topics: product updates, User Group business, local computer-related events, software evaluations—whatever information members might benefit from.

Predictably, newsletters are among the most costly and labor-intensive services a User Group can provide. Newsletter editors have to manage four complex areas
- Editorial—getting articles
- Production—putting the newsletter together
- Circulation—distributing the newsletter to members and, optionally,
- Advertising—soliciting and billing ads.

But even a small User Group can produce a newsletter by following two simple pieces of advice: "Start small" and "Be resourceful."

Starting small means you don't have to produce a monthly magazine. Many groups

> "**O**ur newsletter costs approximately $5 per year per member—primarily the cost of postage. We've worked out an arrangement with our local school system to print our newsletter in exchange for a district membership in the group. Newsletter ads go for $20 per page, and we sell about six a year."
>
> "Our newsletter costs about $20 to $24 per member per year to produce and mail. It is normally 36 to 40 pages and we use bulk mail. We have our newsletter mailed by a local mailing house to our 950 members. We have found that these professionals can mail the newsletter for about the same amount as we can, and we don't have to lick and stick labels."
>
> "Newsletters cost us about $13 to $14 per year."
>
> "Our newsletter costs in 1987 were $32.46 per paid member for 12 issues each."
>
> "We mail only first class, in envelopes. We tried other postage options but dropped them due to lack of reliability." ■

do just fine with a two-page flyer each month. Being resourceful means you don't have to maintain a large staff of writers and editors. Plenty of copy for your newsletter is available free for the asking.

Getting articles. The most important part of a newsletter is, of course, articles or copy. An editor's first job is identifying copy. For the first few issues, getting copy may be simple—maybe it was a backlog of information that got the newsletter idea off the ground. When this first well begins to run dry, however, remember to be resourceful. Some of most User Group newsletters is information adapted or borrowed from other sources. Most User Groups are willing to share their articles with other groups, so long as permission is obtained first from the author or publisher and credit is given when the article is published. Many groups post articles on electronic bulletin board systems or public networks. AppleLink—Apple's on-line information service—can be a great resource for existing User Group copy.

Short, varied copy is always more interesting than rambling expositions. Keep articles in the range of 100 to 300 words. It's easier to get contributions and readers if you think small. Here are some suggestions for types of articles and possible resources.

- Press releases, product updates, and other information available on AppleLink and other electronic

Many new User Groups escape the newsletter pressure cooker by simply reproducing and distributing *Quick Connect* in its entirety —sometimes with a customized cover and backflap that have meeting times and locations included. Others simply incorporate *Quick Connect* articles addressing the needs of their group. In fact, the vast majority of User Group newsletters regularly contain some input from *Quick Connect*. Apple fully supports this application of *Quick Connect* and is always responsive to suggestions for articles to make the publication as appropriate as possbile for group distribution. ∎

networks is easily downloaded and presented in a newsletter. Such sources can be a real boon to the first-time newsletter editor.

- Apple's User Group newsletter, *Quick Connect*, is another source of information for newsletters. Groups can adapt articles for their own newsletter or reproduce all or part of *Quick Connect* directly (just by photocopying). All information in any Apple mailings can also be shared, so make sure newsletter editors get a chance to review whatever materials you receive from Apple.
- Questions and answers—even those voiced at meetings—can be included in your newsletter. In fact, many groups feature a Q & A column for members who can't attend meetings.
- Product reviews, press releases from developers, announcements of industry events—all of these can be valuable to

members when incorporated into a newsletter. If you have a favorite developer, write and ask to be included on the press list. (You don't have to do this with Apple, as User Groups automatically receive product announcements and corporate updates.)

- Original articles are what lend a distinctive flavor to a newsletter. Getting articles from group members, however, is perhaps the greatest challenge faced by a newsletter editor. It often requires haunting volunteer writers and nagging them about their deadlines, a thankless task.

To help the newsletter editor, some User Groups require each member to submit one article to the newsletter as part of the annual dues. Another group gives three months' free membership to members the first time they submit an article. After that, they receive one month extra membership per article. One leader even admitted to publishing articles under various noms de plume so that members would think that they were the only ones who weren't contributing.

As a budding newsletter gains momentum, however, it's likely that members will become more active in contributing articles. Writers can usually be encouraged simply by regularly recognizing the most active contributors. A "frequent writers" program might be considered, including a list of the current top contributor in each newsletter. Tactics like this can go a long way toward building teamwork and engendering member involvement.

Designing your newsletter. Aesthetics are important. A newsletter that looks good will attract articles, attract supporters, and, most important, get read. If no one in your group has produced a newsletter before, someone should do a little research and decide what the newsletter should look like. How many columns should it have? Most pages look best when divided into two or three columns. What typefaces will you use? Pages are most effective when you limit yourself to one or two type styles: one for the copy and one for headers or footers. Look at magazines, books, and newsletters to find a page layout that appeals to you. Use that as a model and set up your newsletter accordingly.

If recruiting volunteer help is your goal, include a few would-be assistant editors in a design committee. It won't be long before they'll be generating copy and laying out pages. Soon you'll be able to add a page or two to your newsletter—and then you're on your way.

The multitude of desktop publishing packages available make the process of designing and experimenting easy. A good desktop publishing program can virtually ensure success, even for your first design venture. Even so, layout—the placement of articles on the page—can be a challenge. You should fix a few regular features so they're always in the same place. Put the most timely information on the front pages and save your boldest typeface for those one or two hot tidbits. To achieve an effective layout, plan the content a little and tweak your copy to fit

your layout design. A little experience—and good software—go a long way in making a layout work.

Output on a LaserWriter® printer always looks great, though many User Groups use ImageWriter® or other dot-matrix printers. Either is acceptable, and good layout and a conservative approach to typefaces can ensure legibility, almost regardless of the quality of print or reproduction.

Graphics are also key. Illustrations can punctuate copy and add interest to an article. The most important mistake made with graphics is overuse. Generally, a graphic should only be used if it adds to the article. Is a visual image worth sacrificing potential copy for? If so, use it. If not, use it only if you're out of things to say.

A number of packages exist to help even novice designers use visual images. Even the most basic clip art programs have great pictures of products and people. Check these as you start your search for good graphic effects. Some groups have access to digitizers and other tools; they can just scan their favorite images to set them in place. If your group is still awaiting this luxury, don't be afraid to physically cut and paste. Just leave an appropriate space blank on the page and go back to it later with your picture and a little glue in hand.

If you're using a photo, you'll need to have it digitized or, alternatively, made into a half-tone (any production house can do this for you—it's the process that breaks down a photo into lots of small dots). If you're using line art (black-and-white drawings), you can usually reproduce them as is. Don't forget that logos, photographs, and other art shouldn't be reproduced without the owner's consent.

Production and distribution. Printing your newsletter can be a challenge because there is so much you must think about first time you go to print. Make lots of notes about your decisions and procedures to simplify things for the next issue.

Remember that your newsletter will have twice as many sides (or original, one-sided pages) as finished pages, and that if you're printing on 11 x 17-inch paper (the kind you fold down the middle to get regular 8 1/2 x 11-inch paper), you'll have to do a little computing to ensure the right layout. Don't worry; any printing house capable of 11 x 17-inch printing knows what to do. Do you want staples? How many? Where? Make all these decisions with your printer and set up procedures so printing is automatic the next time.

Think about mailing before you print—indeed, think out mailing when you design your newsletter. Where will the mailing label go? Will you staple the pages closed before you mail or will you fold the whole publication in half? Doing one mock-up newsletter the first time around will turn your art into a science and make sure that you're happy with the result.

Several desktop publishing software publishers offer special rates to User Groups when they use the publisher's package to produce their newsletters.

You might write to a few desktop publishing software manufacturers and ask for their support. To find likely companies, flip through some of the publications supporting Apple II or Macintosh products and look for desktop-publishing advertisements.

Sharing Software Legally

Another important User Group activity is the legal distribution of public-domain software.

Public-domain software is just what its name implies: software containing only non-copyrighted material released into the public domain and available for distribution without the restrictions applicable to licensed, commercial software. You can freely reproduce public-domain software, share it electronically, or use it in a file-sharing environment.

> Games, templates, desk accessories, mini-applications, timesavers—all are available at almost no cost through User Group public-domain software libraries.

Shareware, freeware, and honorware are slightly different from public-domain software. In most cases, these types of software can be freely copied and tested, but they should be purchased if they are to be used on an ongoing basis.

Typically, shareware and its kin are copyrighted by their respective authors and distributed with the provision that if the user appreciates and uses the software, then he is honor-bound to pay the amount the author requests for that right. Generally speaking, prices are low, and the author makes it easy for the user to send payment.

Most User Groups maintain libraries of public-domain software, which they catalog for easy reference and share freely with members. Usually, the only charge is for the media (the disk the program comes on). Groups exchange software with one another or share programs across international electronic networks, so new public-domain programs constantly appear.

If you're interested in starting a library of public-domain software, you can use AppleLink or AppleLink Personal Edition to ask other User Groups about available libraries. Numerous software authors and User Groups use these networks to exchange programs with other users. You can also contact nearby established User Groups to help you build your library.

Users should know that your User Group distributes the software without any responsibility for its functionality, integrity, or compatibility with other programs on their systems.

System-software licensing. Easy access to new system software upgrades is a tremendous benefit to computer users. Traditionally, Apple has provided system software upgrades through dealers or other official channels of distribution. In the last year, User Group interest in facilitating access to system software upgrades led Apple to expand its licensing procedures to include a User Group distribution option.

System software for the Apple II and Macintosh families can be licensed by User Groups for distribution to their members. To legally distribute system software upgrades, User Groups must sign a contract—the User Group System Software Distribution Agreement—and pay a licensing fee of $75 per system family per year. Under this license, a User Group receives immediate releases of all systems upgrades for the products of its choice. Typically, upgrades are available for the following:

Apple II family	Macintosh family
ProDOS®	System installation disk
DOS	System and Finder™
GSOS	HyperCard upgrades*
	MultiFinder™ upgrades

The original HyperCard application must be purchased through the normal channels.

The license agreement also provides each User Group with sufficient quantities of Apple II or Macintosh disk labels to cover their membership needs. Most groups structure a charge for system software upgrades that covers their material and other costs. Note that manuals for upgrades to system software products are not provided through this licensing agreement.

No User Group is required to participate in this licensing option. It is provided only for those groups that wish to extend this specific benefit to their members. Any group or member who wishes to rely on the dealer channel, on-line services, or other legal and appropriate ways to receive system software upgrades is free to do so.

Groups wishing to review the license agreement should contact

Apple Software Licensing
Apple Computer, Inc.
20525 Mariani Avenue, MS 28B
Cupertino, CA 95014

Attn: T. Drenker, Manager of
Software Licensing
AppleLink: DRENKER1

Cautioning members against software piracy.
Software piracy, or the illegal copying of copyrighted commercial software (and even shareware) is an affront to software authors and publishers.

There are many rationalizations for software piracy. One argument is that one person's copying of software cannot be equated with a lost sale of the product. Such rationalizers say, "I would not have bought what I've copied anyway, so it cannot hurt the author or publisher." Or, alternatively, "I only copy software for the fun of it; I never use it anyway." However, *there is never any good reason to violate software copyrights.* The best User Groups communicate this message to their members.

> In the interest of engendering good relations with computer or software resellers and developers, it is recommended that your User Group's bylaws or constitution include a declaration against software piracy.

The Adventures of a Disk Librarian

by Don Rose
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Disk librarians grew up as collectors. I'm convinced of it. Baseball cards, stamps, rocks, bottle caps—you know what I mean. Ever since I first purchased my shiny new Apple II Plus in 1980, I've been enamored with the notion of collecting bits and pieces of Apple history.

From the beginning, I was interested in ways to organize and keep track of the files I collected. And as Apple evolved, so did my interests and my public-domain software library. I amassed a collection of close to a hundred public-domain and shareware disks for the Apple II and passed the torch along to another User Group member when the Macintosh arrived on the scene.

Today our group boasts a collection of over 110 megabytes of public-domain and shareware information. Obviously, this software has to be carefully organized, or no one will ever be able to find anything. Our group organizes its library into the following categories:

This list changes monthly with more specific categories growing out of more general ones. Most categories (notably DAs, fonts, and HyperCard) are already broken down even further into a number of subcategories. I ask a lot of our members to help classify new programs.

For example, if you know of a member who has a special fondness for games or another equally interested in utilities, I suggest that he or she manage those library categories. That member is then responsible for sorting new files, integrating them onto appropriate disks, and adding new files as appropriate. The central librarian then verifies this work and handles the logistics of distribution.

Our disk numbering scheme is simple yet effective. Each disk bears a number following the actual volume name. A decimal point separates the category sequence number from the release version. For example, a disk named •MD{Text Tools}4.7 would indicate the fourth disk in the Text Tools category in

Artwork	Resources	Sound Envelopes	Font tools
Games	Demonstrations	Macintosh II	Modem tools
Paint tools	Icons	Speech	Utilities
Goodies	Science	Excel	Fonts
Print tools	Disk tools	Math	MS-BASIC
Visuals	Information	Spell checkers	VideoWorks
Home Programming	Screens	Function keys	4th Dimension
Desk accessories (DAs)	Education	Microfilm	Music
HyperCard	InfoMac	Text tools	

its seventh revision. Revisions are necessary as new versions of given files replace older ones or as additional files are added. I use a bullet (•) to indicate HFS 800K disks and always precede our disk names with MD to indicate our group's name, Macademia.

Obviously, the category name itself is important and is included in braces. Although the Macintosh allows file or volume names to contain spaces, I've found that certain programs, such as HyperCard software's external file handler, do not take well to this, so many of the names I use contain no spaces.

Much of the software in our library has been gathered from other User Groups or has been downloaded from one of the electronic services. I've found, however, that a program of regular trading with other groups works well also. There are several groups with which I regularly exchange "latest finds" by sending an 800K disk. This way we collect equivalent material on a reciprocal basis.

Regional group librarian meetings also are beginning to occur, where a half-dozen or so crazed librarians frantically copy each other's disks in order to expand their own collections. Of course, such copying is appropriate only for non-copyrighted software.

At least one "Disk of the Month" is prepared for each meeting, containing the latest library additions. It is sold to members for $1 plus a blank, double-sided disk. This special disk is available only at the meeting it is prepared for as an incentive to attend (which works well!). By paying $5 in advance, a member who is unable to attend a meeting can, however, obtain a Disk of the Month. Subscriptions are also available upon request.

Most members have found our "Welcome Disk" of special interest. It is provided to new members and contains about 600K of the best files from most categories of our library. In addition, it details general library policies and contains our newly created HyperCard stack, which is a searchable listing of all files in all of our library disks. Constantly updating printed lists has become a thing of the past with this new stack.
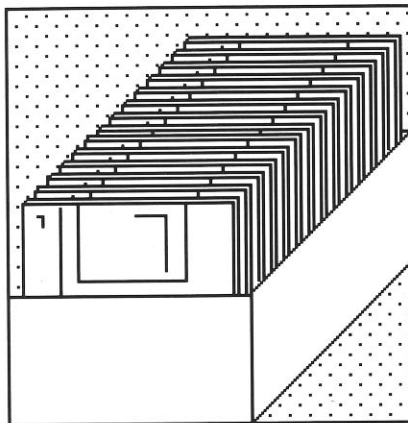
Recent changes made to the library are noted within a special field, and a summary of the most recent Disk of the Month is also available in the stack.

Much of this archiving will get easier in the next few months, as several companies are working with User Groups right now to create master compact disks of public-domain and shareware files. This will revolutionize the librarian's role. I can't wait! ∎

Librarians and Libraries

by Doug Houseman
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AppleLink: UG0025

Being a librarian of a User Group can easily become a full-time job if you let it. After 20 months as the MacTechnics librarian I have burned out. I would not have lasted even that long without the help of a dedicated staff of individuals who took about 50 percent of the load off my shoulders. I would like to thank that staff of individuals for giving me a chance to learn enough to write this article.

Starting a Library

Here are seven ways a group can establish a public-domain software and shareware library. These methods will all lead to the same result.

1. Buy a library commercially. Go to Educomp, Budget Bytes, or another commercial source and buy all of the disks that they currently are selling. This will cost a few hundred dollars, but will result in a library of sufficient size to interest most, if not all, of your members. This library will contain a hundred disks and offer the librarian a leg up in the collection and organization of public-domain software and shareware. It is the second most expensive way to build a library.

2. Buy a library from another group. Call the Boston Computer Society or Washington Apple Pi and buy a copy of their library. Groups charge less than the commercial services, and their libraries usually are more current. If you are forming a Macintosh-only group, contact the Berkeley Macintosh User Group for a copy of their library. These three groups are almost always at Macworld® Expo and will gladly sell you copies of their libraries over the counter at the show.

3. Borrow another User Group's library. Call the Apple User Group Hotline. If you give them your zip code and area code, they will provide the names and addresses of groups in your area. Call or write these groups and ask if you can borrow their libraries. When you copy a library, return it promptly. Be nice and give copies of your release disks to these groups for a few months after you have used their libraries to jump-start yours.

4. Go to a library exchange. In the Midwest the larger User Groups hold a quarterly library exchange to trade software. These meetings are normally attended by three to five groups with libraries that can exceed 200 disks. Information about where and when these exchanges take place is normally posted on both GEnie and AppleLink three to four weeks in advance.

These meetings are open to any User Group that wants to attend. They are normally held at a university in the afternoon and last three to five hours. The host will gladly keep you informed of who is coming and what kind of libraries they have. You must bring your own computers and blank disks. Because of the volume and brief amount of time available, send two or three people, all with computers.

Exchanges are free to attendees; just inform the host that you are coming and the number of computers you are bringing, so that sufficient space is available for you. The spring exchange for 1988 was held at the NAUGC (see item 5) as subsequent ones may be.

5. Go to NAUGC. The National Apple User Group Conference (held each year by a sponsoring User Group, with Apple's support) is an information and library exchange. It is run by and for the User Group community and provides both prepackaged libraries and a computer room where additional disks are available. The prepackaged libraries are sold at the cost of duplication and contain about a hundred disks of the latest material. Attending NAUGC is a good way to procure a library if you can wait until spring of each year. This conference is very well attended by User Groups and is the best means of building lasting trade agreements with other groups.

6. Get it off a network. Use GEnie, CompuServe, or MacNET to get the latest in software for your group and organize a new library from scratch. On GEnie you can fill a 400K disk in an hour for about $5. In other words, to get a 100-disk library this way, your group will spend about $500. On the other networks the price per 400K disk at 1200 baud will be approximately the

hourly connection fee. This is the most expensive way to build a library, and it will take more time and effort than any other way. This is the route that MacTechnics has chosen to build its library, because of the timeliness of the software available on these networks.

7. Get a PC-Pursuit account. This method will cost a flat fee of $25 a month and take more telephone and modem time than using a network account. With PC-Pursuit you can connect to bulletin boards (BBSs) maintained by individu-

als in all of the largest cities in the United States. These boards normally contain all of the software found on networks, but you will take longer to find what you want, due to such factors as busy phone lines and the need to try different sources. PC-Pursuit allows you an unlimited number of connection hours in the evening for the fixed $25 rate, so if money is of more concern than time, PC-Pursuit may be appropriate for your group. Not all BBSs screen the software placed on them as carefully as they should for copyrights and distribution permissions. Therefore, when dealing with a BBS, carefully check the "About . . ." box and any startup screens for information about the program. If a copyright statement is included with no other information, call the author of the program and ask permission before you distribute the software to your group. Most BBS operators try to be very conscientious about the author's rights, but always check anyway.

Organizing Your New Library

Once you have a library started it needs to be organized. The organization should also be maintainable. No disk should stagnate in your library. MacTechnics has two types of library disks. The first is release disks, the disks that we distribute each month to members. The second is permanent disks, which contain the latest version in the library. To update a library takes as much time as to make release disks. I was lucky in having 15 dedicated people who took my release disks and updated

the permanent library disks.

Here are five possible ways of organizing a permanent library:

1. Organizing by type of program. Group all the disk-copy utilities together on a disk, all the word processing utilities together, all paint files together. This method allows the most use to be made of your software library, because a group member need look only at a disk or two to find what is wanted.

2. Organizing by date of creation. This is the easiest way to build a library. Old disks can then be retired when all of the programs on them are superceded or consolidated if only a few programs remain useful. This method is less useful to members, but it has the advantage of being less time consuming to maintain.

3. Organizing by Special Interest Group (SIG). This method allows each SIG to maintain a sublibrary of interest to its members. This means that each SIG and its leader are responsible for maintaining its own library. This approach is more expensive, and the overlap in material will be significant, but it spreads the workload over a number of people—so if one person does not do the job, the whole library is not lost. If you use this method, call the SIG librarians monthly to ensure they still live in your city and belong to your group. One User Group lost two SIG libraries by having the SIG librarians move out of town, taking the SIG libraries with them.

4. Building a library by keepers. This allows people in the group who have an interest in a particular area of the library to organize the material under that topic as they please. This method again spreads the work around and allows the librarian to concentrate on new material, not the organization of the library overall. There is some overlap in material, but not as much as with the SIG libraries method of organization. When topic groups grow too unwieldy, they can be split into new categories, and more people can participate. This is the method MacTechnics uses. A year ago we had 22 topics, now we have 59. The keepers are totally responsible for updating their sections, getting from the librarian the released disks they think are important and then updating their topic sections of the library. In return, they have complete freedom to organize the topic any way they want to. This has led to a loyal group of volunteers that will help with other tasks that need to be done when asked. I took this idea from the Urbana, Illinois, User Group and adapted it to MacTechnics. It seems to really work well for both groups.

5. By release. With this method the release disks are all that the library has. Normally the disks are sold by the group—a single duplication run is made of these disks, and when the disks are gone, then the disk no longer exists in the library.

Release Disks

Most groups meet once or twice a month. At these meetings, new disks are made available to members. These disks are either precopied and sold or are copied at the meeting. Two popular ways of handling release disks are the disk of the month approach and the shotgun approach.

1. Disk of the Month approach (DOM). A DOM is a disk that contains the best (to the organizer) new software for that month. It is always organized, tested, and adequately documented. Normally the disk also includes a text file that tells members what is on the disk and what these programs do, and that fills in any holes in the program author's documentation. Proper preparation of a DOM takes time since the software must be tested on a number of different computers with different operating systems and hardware configurations. The major problems with a DOM are that it may not meet the special needs of individual members and the amount of material that can be released by this method is limited.

2. Shotgun approach. With the shotgun method the librarian puts all programs that have been collected out on disk, without organization or comments. Members then can review the material to find what they want. Some librarians test each program once or twice on a system and organize programs by topic. To service the needs of 700 diverse users of the Macintosh, I follow this last approach. Be aware that so much

software may come in some months that you need 30 or more disks to hold it. (My average was twenty-two 800K disks per month by the end of my term as librarian.)

3. Other approaches. There are as many ways of handling a release disk as there are librarians, so adopt a method that will work for your librarian, and let your librarian try different approaches until he or she finds a method that works well for your group.

Distribution

How to handle distribution of programs is a topic of considerable debate: Should User Groups charge for software created by others? Your group will have to answer this question itself. Instead of dwelling on this question, I will describe the alternative methods of distribution.

1. Selling your disks. If you choose this approach you can prepare disks in either of two way. You can commercially duplicate your disks and sell them to members for a fixed price. The group may or may not make a profit on the disks. Commercial duplication requires an investment of money for each release disk and an inventory of disks for future sales. Alternatively, members of the club can duplicate the disks and sell them at the meeting. This too means an inventory and up-front investment. However, disks can be reused if the software does not sell. Some groups pay a member to run this disk copying service.

2. Giving your collected software away. You can have members buy blank media and bring a computer to the meeting to copy disks just for themselves. A member who cannot bring a computer to the meeting (or borrow one) cannot get any software from your group. MacTechnics uses a variation of this approach. A copy crew brings computers to a meeting once a year and copies a disk for everyone who wants it. Members put their disks in a pile and go on to the SIG meetings while the copy crew works. Members of the copy crew get access to the permanent library during the copy session and head-of-the-line privileges for disk sales. These incentives had led to about 10 percent of the members each month packing up their computers and bringing them to the meetings.

Policy and Miscellany

The librarian should write a set of policies for the use and distribution of library material. These policies should be at the discretion of the librarian (with the consent of your club's officers or board of directors). Decisions on the beginning and end of copy sessions, how such sessions are organized, and who can get disks should reside solely with the librarian. The budget for the library should be the domain of the board of directors. A library can cost several hundred dollars a month to maintain if you let it. Our group allows $90 a month for downloading fees and $10 a month postage, and we have more than 700 members. Blank disks for the librarian are limited to about 60 per month and

they remain property of the User Group, not the librarian. The librarian should be a volunteer and a member of the board of directors. The library budget is normally the second largest part of a group's expenditures, second only to the newsletter. Make the librarian account for expenditures each month.

Always ensure that there are at least two copies of every library disk. When you finish organizing a disk, duplicate it right then. Do not get rid of the items you put on the new disk until you've copied that disk and the copy is stored in a safe place.

Choosing a Librarian

Finding the right librarian is an important step in maintaining a library. A librarian should be hard working and have experience with the computer the library is for. He or she should be an honest individual, committed to doing a good job, and capable of leading. A good librarian would make a good president for most groups, but the two jobs together are too much for any one individual. In all cases, it should be the level of interest and commitment that determine who becomes your librarian. If you have a new user managing your library, things will likely be rocky for a couple of meetings, but they will improve if the
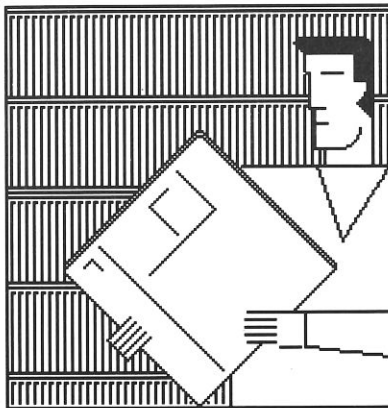
librarian is dedicated. Retired members are looking for things to do often make good librarians. Many times your librarian will be someone you never expected could do the job. Never elect a librarian; always appoint one. An election may select the most popular person, not the best person.

Once you have selected a librarian, give the person a few months to adjust to the job. Remember: Those persons appointed by the president can be fired by the president. If you have problems and decide to fire the current librarian, make sure you have a new librarian lined up before you axe your current person.

Library Staff

The amount of public-domain software and shareware available means that either the librarian will spend the equivalent of full time doing the job, or a staff is needed. During my tenure as librarian, I built a staff of keepers—people who had an interest in one or more categories of software. These people did about 50 percent of the library maintenance. When I retired, we added the positions of downloader, to get the new software from GEnie, and copy-session supervisor. As your group and library grow so will the need for a good library staff. ∎

People—not User Groups—copy software. But User Groups that condone or allow members' illegal copying of commercial software must be willing to accept the consequences. Apple will not recognize or communicate with any groups that allow this process in any way.

User Groups have the power to turn the tide on unauthorized copying. Firmly convey this message to your group and stand behind it.

Using Bulletin Board Systems

What do User Group members do to get ideas and answers between newsletters and meetings? Many of them share insights electronically over local or national computer networks, called electronic bulletin board systems, or BBSs. These systems can be large or small, public or private, but all allow information to be shared among users with similar interests.

Hundreds of User Groups across the

country maintain electronic bulletin board systems. BBSs provide a forum for exchange of all types of user information.

There are many types of BBSs. An on-line system with two floppy drives and a 1200-baud modem is usually sufficient as a source of quick information—of "When is the next meeting?" type of stuff. You would need to buy a Macintosh Plus or used 512K enhanced with an external 800K drive, $80 or so for a modem, $5 a month for a phone line, and electricity for 24-hour operation.

At the higher end is a BBS that contains electronic versions of the latest newsletter, some public-domain files, and so forth. For this purpose, a Macintosh Plus and 20 megabyte small computer system interface (SCSI) drive will be needed. If your electronic newsletter is large, a 2400-bits-per-second (bps) modem is best. Several modem manufacturers offer BBS Sysops excellent direct pricing and support. Since roughly 45 percent of BBS users have 2400 bps modems, this extra power will not go to waste. ∎

Stu Gitlow
Laser Net User Group, New York
Laser Board (around the world)
AppleLink: A0139

In a sense, they really are User Groups, too—ones that meet electronically.

Many User Groups choose to start their own BBSs; others elect to tie in to an existing local BBS or other electronic

EchoMac: Connecting User Groups Nationwide

If your Macintosh User Group is thinking of setting up a bulletin board system (BBS), or even if your group already has one, consider joining what is now the fastest growing on-line service for Macintosh owners: EchoMac. EchoMac, the Macintosh conference run on FidoNet-compatible bulletin boards, is now the nation's third largest Macintosh on-line service.

What Are EchoMac and FidoNet?

FidoNet was created in 1984 by Tom Jennings, a former Apple employee, to allow bulletin boards to send electronic mail to each other. Since its inception, FidoNet has grown at a rapid pace and now includes 2,000 nodes around the world. A recent addition to the electronic mail facilities is Echo conferencing, where messages sent on one bulletin board are echoed to all bulletin boards receiving information on a particular topic. EchoMac, the Macintosh conference run on Fido compatible bulletin boards, currently boasts over 100 nodes and an estimated 10,000 participants. If current growth rates continue, EchoMac will become the largest Macintosh on-line service in America within two years.

How Can You Make Your Bulletin Board FidoNet Compatible?

Michael Connick, author of the Mouse Exchange BBS, has recently announced the implementation of FidoNet on the Macintosh. His FidoNet implementation, called Tabby News, will in principle work with any Macintosh bulletin board system, so long as the author cooperates in making minor modifications to the code. Connick, a New Jersey-based computer consultant, has also announced plans for a HyperCard-based mail system that allows their BBS to call them whenever material addressed to them arrives.

Scott Watson, author of the Red Ryder telecommunications program and Red Ryder Host bulletin board software, has already begun the effort to make the next release of Red Ryder Host FidoNet compatible, and work has also begun by other authors. If software development remains on schedule, many of the estimated 1000 Macintosh bulletin boards nationwide will be capable of running FidoNet within the next 12 months.

Aside from the EchoMac conference, FidoNet also offers private electronic mail capabilities. Recently, FidoNet and USENET, the network of UNIX® computers, have been linked by a gateway developed by Tim Pozar, John Galvin, and Garry Paxinos. The FidoNet/USENET gateway will allow FidoNet and USENET, ARPANET, and BITNET users to send and receive electronic mail and hold conferences. In addition, DA Systems of Cupertino has recently announced successful linking of

their universal gateway service DASNet with FidoNet. This link will allow FidoNet users to send electronic mail to users of MCI Mail, the Source, AT&T Mail, the WELL, Portal, PeaceNet/EcoNet, and several other commercial on-line services. DASNet costs $4.50 per month plus fees from the commercial services.

For more information about EchoMac or FidoNet, call the MailCom message center at (415) 855-9548 or send AppleLink mail to Raines Cohen (UG0001) or Bernard Aboba (UG0031). ∎

Fido Software
164 Shipley St.
San Francisco, CA 94107
(415) 764-1688

Tim Pozar
2215-R Market St., Suite 188
San Francisco, CA 94114
FidoNet 125/406

Vernon Keenan
Macintosh Tribune
(415) 923-1235
FidoNet 125/444

Raines Cohen
BMUG
(415) 849-HELP
FidoNet 161/444

Bernard Aboba
MailCom Message Center
(415) 855-9548
FidoNet 143/444

communications system. Many don't get involved with BBSs at all. Groups that don't establish BBS networks may recommend that members use on-line services such as AppleLink Personal Edition or one of the many other public electronic networks that actively support product information exchanges.

A Few More Ideas

In addition to holding meetings, publishing newsletters, disseminating public-domain software, and participating in bulletin board systems, here are a few more ideas for services your User Group can offer.

Starting Special Interest Groups. As a group grows in size and range of interests, it is inevitable that some members will develop special needs or interest areas and will want to explore them. To accommodate these members, you can set up Special Interest Groups, or SIGs, and allow members to break off from the group as a whole to focus on their areas of interest. Smaller groups may incorporate SIG meetings into their regular monthly

schedule, having first a general discussion and then adjourning, SIG by SIG, into different corners of the room. Large groups may have dozens of SIGs, with independent meetings held throughout the month, separate newsletters, and so on.

Providing training and orientation. Almost all User Groups offer some sort of training or orientation to their members. The range of such services is vast: from a seasoned member tutoring a neophyte user in the basics of AppleWorks® software to a group of 40 learning together in a structured desktop publishing training seminar. Every step in this range is valuable. The size and needs of your group will determine the type of training that makes the most sense for you.

If your group is located near a larger User Group, join that group to expand training opportunities and provide greater service to your members.

Developing resource centers. A resource center is an office for the User Group—a place where members can go to review materials, try new software, and use equipment owned by the group. Only a handful of User Groups can afford this luxury and by no means is it critical for a User Group to offer such a center.

Many groups centralize information from Apple and other manufacturers, functionally limited software demonstration disks, and other group resources in areas where members can easily use and learn from them. The home of a retired or self-employed group member

is one possible location, especially if the group size is manageable and if members schedule their visits in a manner convenient to the gracious host.

A local public library or some semipublic office might also be a good location for a shared resource center. The host benefits from having the information on hand when members aren't using it, and the members benefit from having regular, centralized access. When your group is established, you may want to consider setting up a central site.

Evaluating products. Product reviews are another obvious User Group activity. As members try new hardware or software products, they can share their opinions, formally or informally, with other members. User Group members can evaluate products in newsletters, at meetings (often by simply standing up and providing a testimonial), on bulletin board systems, or in casual exchanges with other members.

Getting the user-to-user lowdown on a given product is often an important factor in your members' own purchase decisions. Most User Groups know, though, that one person's cake may be another person's poison.

When a product opinion, favorable or otherwise, is voiced, many User Groups ask for second opinions. This could be as casual as asking "Anyone agree? Disagree?" at a meeting, or as formal as requesting a rebuttal article in your newsletter.

3

Managing Your Success

So, you're up and running. You have a feel for where things are going, you're making some good contacts in your area and in the industry, and your members keep telling you how much they're getting out of the meetings, newsletters, and so forth.

Congratulations! You've made it. But don't sit still. You've only just begun! Now it's time to plan for your ongoing development. Gaining visibility, adding services, and staffing for success are among the next goals you'll face. The following pages discuss these important areas, and provide insights into how other User Groups have successfully launched themselves into continuing growth and development.

Building Membership

Ongoing membership growth is critical to the longevity of your group. So is maintaining a balance between the technically expert members of your group and the neophytes. People with questions need people with answers. Developing a membership with users at both ends of the spectrum is important to your group's success. The following paragraphs offer a few ideas about how to sustain and manage growth.

Publicizing your group. Most newspapers—even community or neighborhood publications—maintain a special classified section for community-service announcements. Usually, this includes information about User Group meetings. Check with the classified section of your local newspapers to find what service they offer.

Similarly, local radio stations and public and cable television stations often make public-service announcements at no charge. If your group is business oriented, an announcement during peak commute hours might help you reach prospective members. If your focus is more diverse, an announcement following a regularly featured program about computers (many stations feature local or syndicated talk shows on the subject) might yield the best results.

When dealing with the media, the side-door approach may be as effective as the front door approach. For example, it might be tough to get an article titled, "Local Computer Advocates Lauch User Group" into your local paper. The editor might tell you that not enough of the paper's readership is interested in computers. However, if you choose the right angle for your story, you may be able to call attention to your group. An article such as "Local Computer Supporters Update Aged Care Facility" or "Computer Users Society Assists in Local Election" (both of which were placed in major local newspapers) highlights not computers, but what can be done with them, as well as your group.

Any group can add local dealers, Apple contacts, newspaper editors, local developers, and industry pundits to the group's database, ensuring that they receive newsletters and other announcements. An occasional personal follow-up with these contacts will keep them

interested in the group and aware of its current direction. The halo effect of this kind of public relations work can help bring in members from surprising places.

Make your group's promotional flyer look great. Review magazines for advertisements and articles that really appeal to your eye. Take a pencil and break the major spatial areas into rectangular shapes and analyze the balance and composition. Practice this with a few appealing layouts—and maybe an unappealing one or two—to get a feel for designing a format that works for you.

Limit the number and size of fonts you use in a piece and use a simple format. Some variety is good, but too much will make your flyer too cluttered to read.

Choose one or two graphic elements that reinforce your message. Or choose all the graphics you'd like to use—and then remove one. In design, a little restraint can go a long way toward creating an effective piece.

"Negative space"—space deliberately left blank—is among the most positive investments you can make in readability. Don't try to fill every space. You'll never be able to communicate all your group has to offer, even by filling every square centimeter with 9-point Helvetica® type. Leave some open places for the eyes to rest, and your words will have more impact. ■

Creating promotional flyers. Materials that encapsulate what your group is about can sell memberships for you, even when you can't be there. The most important goal of a promotional brochure, flyer, or other such item is to make a favorable first impression on the reader. A successful pro-

motional piece should appeal to the eye, hook the readers interest, communicate only the essentials, and provide the reader with an action he or she can take.

Plan your promotional materials to directly address your typical potential member. Watch for promotional styles and images that speak to you and inspire your own images and messages.

If your group produces a newsletter, it may make sense to design your promotional piece with a similar look and feeling. The average reader retains visual images even better than words. Continuity between the promotional piece and the other pieces your group produces will evoke a feeling of professionalism, stability, and value.

Make sure your reader knows exactly what to do once he or she has read your brochure. Your promotional materials should make a strong call to action, asking the reader to attend an upcoming meeting or to join the group by taking the following specific steps.

A sample layout for a User Group promotional flyer is shown here. Think about ways in which elements from it

could be incorporated into your own promotional materials.

Hints from the experts indicate that User Groups should not use self-mailer flyers (those with prepaid postage) to recruit members. The extra planning and expense does not seem to affect prospective members' interest. If you do, however, use a self-mailer, make sure you check with your local post office to ensure that it meets their specifications.

Putting your promotional materials to work.
Once you've created your flyer or other promotional materials, you have to successfully place them. Recruiting new members is a numbers game. To accomplish your goal, you need to place your materials where the most people likely to join your group are likely to see them. Here are some suggestions:
- Computer stores and related resellers
- Local bookstores, especially in the computer section
- Public libraries
- YMCA and YWCA offices
- Campus and company bulletin boards (get the required clearances first)
- Grocery store bulletin boards
- School or company cafeterias
- Chamber of Commerce offices

In addition, some User Groups have found the following recruitment strategies successful:
- Hold special events in public libraries or at a local shopping mall.
- Offer a special program to young computer users and ask them to invite their parents.

- Award one month's free membership or some other special recognition whenever an established member brings a new member into the group (after all, shouldn't your existing members be your best promoters?).
- Help a local charity with its newsletter for the "fee" of including a very short write-up about your organization in every issue.
- Publish your meeting times in company newsletters, especially companies your members work for.
- Spread the word with local schools, the chamber of commerce, and any other civic organizations. Offer services to them in exchange for their promotion of your group.
- Send a qualified, experienced speaker to local business associations, PTA meetings, or other such gatherings of potential members.

Above all else, sustain and promote the enthusiasm, camaraderie, and sense of fun that brought your group together in the first place. Nothing succeeds like success.

Getting and Managing Volunteers
Volunteerism is truly the lifeblood of User Group activity. No other activity is more challenging to drive, plan for, and manage. But no other activity is as potentially rewarding or has such potential to set your User Group ahead of the pack.

Successfully managing volunteers demands a careful balance of challenge and recognition and emphatic leadership so that volunteers don't "burn out."

Mac dBUG membership is $35 for the first year, and $25 thereafter; corporate memberships for four or more people are available at $25 per member annually. Since we are a nonprofit organization, your membership fee is tax-deductible. You can turn in this form with payment to a dBUG cashier at any meeting, or mail it to the address below (please, no cash by mail, only checks, VISA or Mastercard).

Name		Date	
Company			
Address			
City		State	Zip
Work Phone		Home Phone	
Areas of special interest			

If corporate membership please provide above information for each member covered by company membership.

Credit card #

Name, exactly as it appears on card

☐ VISA ☐ Mastercard   Expiration Date

Signature

Total

Please make checks payable to "MacdBUG"
Mac dBUG • P.O. Box 3463 • Seattle, WA 98114-3463
dBUG Hotline 363-9056. dBUG dBBS 281-7338

What Is dBUG?

By Tim Celeski
President, downtown
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AppleLink: UG0048

This is actual copy from a six-page promotional flyer of a successful user group . . .

d BUG" is an acronym for the Macintosh "downtown Business Users Group," and we are a User Group in every sense of the word. Formed in 1985 and run entirely by volunteers, dBUG is a nonprofit organization made up of Apple Macintosh users. We are based upon a simple concept: people that seriously use computers for work, can make more effective use of them by sharing their knowledge.

The group has become very successful, both in terms of its service to members and as an advocate for a closer relationship between dealers, manufacturers, and users. As the computer industry matures, User Groups are becoming an increasingly important way for new users to get the

information they need to run their computers. dBUG focuses on that need. Though we have many advanced users, we make a special effort to help new users of the Macintosh computer.

Our membership ranges from professionals in every field, from executives of some of Seattle's biggest corporations to the smallest of businesses. Since we are the largest Macintosh User Group in the Northwest, we attract people who simply use the Macintosh at home. Though our focus is business, we try to appeal to everyone who is serious about using the Macintosh.

dBUG is run entirely by volunteers. As a group geared toward business, one of our greatest assets is the high quality creativity and skills that the active members bring to the group. Our management consists of three officers and six board members who are elected by the general membership for a term of one year. In addition, there are specialists who volunteer their skills in professional management, advertising, public relations, graphics, journalism, software and hardware engineering, and many other areas to help dBUG run smoothly. Our professional approach to User Group management has helped dBUG to be recognized nationally for our innovative techniques.

Why Should I Join?

General meeting Our monthly general meeting is open to all. We meet to examine new products, hear special speakers, and exchange information. Our normal meeting day is the second Wednesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. We usually meet at Seattle Central Community College, but when the need arises we move to the Crown Plaza Hotel in downtown Seattle or the Seattle Center.

Special Interest Groups Our Special Interest Groups (SIGs) hold meetings throughout the month at Seattle Central Community College. At these meetings members can share advice, and get hands-on help with particular areas of interest. Graphics, databases, spread-sheets, HyperCard, word processing, computer aided design, communications, and beginners are part of the growing list of SIGs available to members.

Public-domain software library Members obtain reduced rates to public domain and shareware software and disks from our library, which we bring to each general meeting. Our software offerings include monthly *new and hot* disks as well as a full, cataloged library of hundreds of disks including utilities, on-disk magazines, demonstration versions of commercial software, desk accessories, games, and more.

The dBUG Journal The purpose of the journal, published yearly, is to fill the void that we believe exists in the Macintosh community: a source of independent, business-oriented information about the Macintosh, presented in terms the average user can understand. This is not an insider's guide or a magazine for Mac hackers; its goal is to answer the questions you would ask other Macintosh users at monthly dBUG meetings. The journal is also one of the reasons dBUG is growing nationally as well as locally. It covers an area unique to computer publications: how people use the computer to get work done. With our impressive demographics, dBUG is a rich source for detailed information on exactly how people work with their computers: What are their choices in software and hardware? What techniques do they use? How have they designed their particular setup to work in a business environment?

dBUG Newsletter Our monthly dBUG Newletter provides information about dBUG activities and events, and contains the latest news about the Macintosh.

dBBS The dBUG dBBS is an electronic bulletin board system that can be accessed with your Macintosh, a modem, a telephone, or communications software. Members can use electronic mail, get quick answers to questions, copy selected public-domain software from the dBBS to their own computer, or just chat. dBUG will also rent members a modem on a monthly basis for $15, so that you can try out Macintosh telecommunications without having to buy a modem.

Disk of the month Each month, members who bring in a blank disk can have a disk full of public-domain software copied onto it for free. We specially select a different collection of public-domain software each month; and it is available only to dBUG members.

The dBUG Hotline The dBUG Hotline is for up-to-the-minute information about meetings and help for members with urgent questions.

New Programs Planned for '88
Novice and Intermediate Training Program

Mentor program New members or novice members will be assigned a volunteer mentor to call to help with Mac-related problems or questions.

Survival kit A specially selected collection of essential public-domain and shareware software.

Volunteers must see the benefits their efforts provide and feel that their work is contributing to their own personal growth as well as to that of the group.

Motivating volunteers. How you motivate your volunteers is a key factor in getting and keeping volunteers. What motivates people in their paid careers? Certainly, financial remuneration. But numerous other factors also play a role. Challenge, recognition, title, career development, teamwork opportunities, the satisfaction of delivering results—all of these play a role in motivation. These motivations are as applicable to the 10-member group as they are to the 10,000-member one.

User Groups clearly cannot offer the financial incentives of a normal work environment. Instead, the successful User Group leader must use other motivational trump cards—and the passion of the individual volunteer—to evoke the best performance.

Just like any manager, the person in the User Group who catalyzes volunteer involvement must be able to deliver recognition and to share the glory and rewards of a job well done. In a well-managed group, a volunteer's contributions should be among the most rewarding, appreciated aspects of his or her life.

Recognition should be not only from you, but from the entire group. Acknowledging volunteers at monthly meetings, rewarding "Volunteers of the Month," and otherwise providing public praise for a job well done will not only sustain your existing volunteers, but appeal to potential contributors.

Commitment to a worthwhile cause increases the satisfaction a member feels in his or her contributions to the group. Let your volunteers know the impact their efforts have upon the other members. Encourage them to put their signature on their work and let them know that their work creates the "product" for which members join and renew. Use surveys, growth statistics, and other data (quantifiable and otherwise) to show them the impact they have on the group.

It is incredible how much time people have to give to a cause in which they believe. Fostering a User Group with which your members firmly identify is the best way to motivate energetic, committed volunteer effort.

Giving the volunteer a real job. Titles help give credit to volunteers. Remind volunteers that these titles don't have to begin and end in the User Group; "Editor, Sun City User Group Times" is a perfectly

> **Recognition among your members is a great thing. But other members of the community can also play a role in acknowledging outstanding volunteer achievement. If you're friendly with a local dealer, ask to display the name and merits of your "Volunteer of the Month" in their retail outlet. This should generate interest among the dealers' customers and goodwill between them and your group. Even the act of electing this volunteer will add prestige to volunteer activity among your members.**

legitimate credential to add to a résumé. It may represent a different sort of responsibility from that the individual has had in his or her salaried position.

When setting a title, first clearly define a set of responsibilities and then make sure the title reflects those responsibilities. Check regularly with volunteers to make sure their job descriptions actually reflect the work they're doing. This process will help them stay on track, minimize "turf wars" between volunteers, and facilitate the transfer of responsibilities when a new volunteer steps into the job.

If the group is financially able, providing business cards to key volunteers is another means of recognizing and legitimizing the important contributions they make.

Facilitating feedback. A successful volunteer leader will also facilitate unbiased, constructive criticism. Providing structured, regular forums for evaluation accomplishes two goals: It ensures that you're apprised of your members' needs and expectations, and it provides an outlet for managing unconstructive or unanticipated complaints. Consider scheduling regular surveys or review meetings for evaluation.

Of course, members should be able to provide feedback on an ongoing basis. But having a member complain throughout your meeting about the quality of a particular program can ruin morale. Standardize mechanisms that allow constructive criticism for your volunteers and for the membership at large.

A little help is better than none. Don't underestimate the value of part-time help.

O ne of the most successful volunteer organizations in existence, the Peace Corps, says goodbye to every volunteer—even the best—after a maximum of five years. Why? First, the Peace Corps knows that burnout is inevitable. No one can work on the same project for an indefinite period of time. Having the five-year limit helps volunteers to see a light at the end of the tunnel—and to get the most out of their experience while it lasts. Also, the five-year limit ensures an influx of new blood into the organization. All in all, though most User Groups don't have the "summer camp" feeling of the Peace Corps, there's a lesson to be learned here.

Evaluate where your volunteers lie on the leader-follower spectrum. Some people will do almost any kind of work, but need constant instruction and guidance. Others can organize projects and people, but need to feel in charge. Keep these differences in mind when defining responsibilities for specific volunteers.

Someone who might not have time to act as treasurer of your group might have time to, say, report on door-prize income after each meeting. Encourage people to support your full-time staff. Assistant editors, meeting advisors, and other part-time contributors can help relieve the pressure sometimes put on a more involved volunteer. Encourage your staff to take advantage of those members who have just a little time each month to help. You may be surprised just how helpful those few hours can be.

Sharing Responsibilities through Elections

Most User Groups have some elective offices and hold elections once a year. This helps achieve healthy turnover within the group and creates a "light at the end of the tunnel" for officers. The smart User Group leader will incorporate the proven skills of a "volunteer emeritus" or the contributions of the runner-up for a desired position into the ongoing work of the group—for once you've found a great volunteer, you should do whatever you

A User Group is made up of sharers and users. A successful group is sustained by the sharers. During the early years, a half dozen people did everything at A.P.P.L.E. It takes that many people willing to commit voluntarily 20 hours a week of their own time to keep a group moving. When we had a newsletter that needed to be stuffed, labeled, and mailed, the sharers did whatever it took to get the job done, often enlisting the help of their entire families and even their neighbors.

If you have a strong core of sharers, you can convert users to sharers. Without that strong core, however, it is impossible to expand the group's activities. A handful of energetic volunteers accomplish much more than a horde of conscripts.

Users are important; a group must have sufficient members who share common interests and who partake of the services and contribute dues. But it has been our experience that 5 percent of the people do 90 percent of the work. The kind of people who volunteer are those who enjoy providing services. Their reward is being able to provide those services.

Our group is a business now, though several of the core staff members were early volunteers, and even though we're pretty big, we still use volunteers for some key functions such as consulting, leading Special Interest Groups, organizing public-domain software libraries, and managing the bulletin board system. ■

Dick Hubert
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One Mac, One Vote:
A Few Guidelines to Organizing Elections for Your User Group

by Jeff Meyer
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The purpose of this article is to show you what one User Group did to make elections easier. You can adapt its advice to your group's particular needs; it should give you a solid framework to plan your own election around. If you think that your group is too small to benefit from this article, I urge you to reconsider: Your group will probably grow, and you may find yourself suddenly confronted with the same situation we did. It doesn't take much time for your officers or board members to make some of the choices discussed here—and take my word for it: You'll thank yourselves later.

When Dictatorships Begin to Look Attractive

I remember, with no great affection, an October evening last year when I worked six hours straight putting together a preliminary ballot for the Seattle Macintosh downtown Business User Group election. With only a few hours to go before the printing deadline, I had managed to squeeze all the candidates' names and qualifications onto one double-sided sheet of paper and was consoling myself with the fact that until next year, the task was completed. I handed a sample copy over to Ken, a fellow dBUG member and workaholic, for him to proofread. I began to yawn with alarming frequency while he paged through the ballot.

"Well," he said, after some deliberation, "it looks great, Jeff . . . except, where's the space for write-in candidates?"

After several moments of determined, nay, inspired, swearing over my omission of the write-in candidate section (and the work correcting it would take), I turned to Ken, who shared the responsibility of handling User Group elections. "Do you think," I pleaded, "just this once, that we could have a military coup and appoint a junta?"

Ken smiled and patted me on the back. "Sorry, Jeff, I'm afraid that's out of the question."

"But it'd be so much easier to organize! How about an enlightened dictatorship?"

He shook his head sadly. "Maybe next year."

Well, he was right. Americans seem to take pride in doing things democratically, especially when it comes to running organizations. Your User Group will want an orderly, efficient election to appoint officers who will run the group for the next year. However, like any activity that involves a lot of people, it can be complex to organize, whether you have 50 or 5000 members.

In the early days, holding elections was relatively simple. We had to virtually beat the bushes to get people to run for office; the charter members of the group were elected and reelected almost by rote. Elections were held during the November meeting. The number of dBUG members eventually rose, however, to a level where we began mailing out ballots. Finally, we had an influx of new blood: Sixteen people wanted to run for the dBUG executive board! This enthusiastic volunteerism was exceedingly gratifying to the old board, but it came as somewhat of a surprise. Elections, which had been handled in a relaxed manner beforehand, suddenly became much more complicated, and (as one of the two people in charge of the event) my life became quite harried. The election came off successfully, if not gracefully, but the campaign schedule was not the cakewalk of bygone days.

It could have been, though. If we had written down a few basic rules at the beginning, outlining several standard procedures, we would have been able to get through the process without having to make election policy "on the fly." And that would have simplified things immensely. Every task is several times less complicated when you have a set of rules to guide you and a schedule already laid out. Since a formal procedure has been set down, dBUG elections have been much easier to orchestrate; our election policies and calendar are in our charter and are available for anyone running for office to see. It has proven to be a very effective system.

Before the First Election

Hold it! Before we even get to running the election, there are a few pieces of integral information you'll need to ascertain first. Like just *who* are you electing, anyway? You may already know what positions you want in your User Group; you may have already held your first election. But there are some points that can be easily overlooked during the first several elections. Read this section first and see if you've missed anything.

First, what offices will members be elected to in your group? The archetypical quintet of officers—president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer (though the last two positions are often combined into one secretary-treasurer office)—are pretty standard for most organizations. So is an executive board, an elected group of members who hold no individual titles, but who vote on policies, activities, and financial decisions for the group. But you may wish also to have special-purpose positions in your group: for instance, a chief librarian for your public-domain software library or a liaison to Macintosh dealers. Also, if you have Special Interest Groups (SIGs), you may want SIG leaders to hold office too. However, you need not hold elections for all positions; the officers or the executive board can appoint those that are appropriate. dBUG elects three officers and an executive board, who appoint, rather than elect, special-purpose offices, and SIG leaders are volunteers who are courageous enough to start the SIG in the first

place. Your group will need to make these decisions before going any farther.

A more readily overlooked set of rules is one governing candidate qualifications: What qualifications should anyone running for office in your group have? Membership in the group is certainly a minimum requirement; a condition that the candidate must have been a member for at least a specified number of months or years is common. The office itself may also carry qualifications, both general and specific. For example, some offices may require the officeholder to attend a certain percentage of the main meetings or of the officers and board meetings. Candidates must be willing and able to accept the responsibilities specific positions entail; for example, the president may have to arrange for guest speakers to address the group, or the Macintosh dealer liaison may have to contact local dealers at least once a month. At dBUG, we have specified that any board member must own a computer and a modem, so that they can log on to our electronic bulletin board system (BBS) over the phone at least once a week. Due to the board members' busy schedules, meetings are difficult to schedule and word-of-mouth communication is too irregular; the BBS has turned out to be the one communication medium where everyone can find out what's on the User Group agenda. Finally, some requirements may relate to the election process itself, such as a candidate being required to submit a short biography or position statement by a certain date or to attend a "meet the candidates" gathering for the general membership.

The actual election process should also be outlined; for example, whether the group will allow absentee ballots or just in-person voting. Whatever the rules, qualifications, or requirements, get them on paper and ratify them at a board meeting. Then announce them at your next meeting or, even better, place them in your group's newsletter, if you publish one. You might even ask the general membership to vote on your policies. At the very least, though, make sure copies are available at all meetings for members to peruse. Although the waiting line to read these rules may not be long, it's important to have your organization's constitution readily available.

Running the Election: Delegate!

If you have a small group, you may want to simplify the procedures presented here, and differences between your group and dBUG (which has a large local membership, but very few remote members) may require some additional modifications. But most of the procedures we came up with are, I think, generally applicable. The first and most important rule in conducting an election is, start early! Rushing things at a later time is *the* major source of complication. An early start gives you room to breathe if there are any complications. It also gives members an opportunity to voice any reservations they have about the election process; any serious objections can be dealt with before the election is underway. The more relaxed the pace of the election, the less members will feel that they are being rushed into anything.

I strongly recommend that the board or officers appoint an election committee, a group of people who perform the majority of the duties needed to hold a successful election. These should include:
- Printing election announcements in the group's publications (newsletters, flyers, and so on)
- Processing nominations and determining if nominees are qualified
- Printing and counting ballots
- Announcing winners

When selecting the election committee, try to involve some people who are not officers or board members. This prevents the election from appearing to be dominated by incumbents (though they may be the only people volunteering to help; this is one of the great ironies of the democratic system). Also, don't include anyone running for office on the committee, though this rule may be difficult to follow, because the people who volunteer their time for election committees are usually the same people who volunteer for office. Finally, leave handling any unforeseen events or unspecified elections procedures to the discretion of the election committee; allow the committee to make changes as necessary.

The Election Calendar

Once you have the election requirements and qualifications written down and convinced your officers that you'll be able to appoint an election committee, you need only one more thing: an election calendar, or a schedule of dates and deadlines for major steps in the election process. You'll probably want to decide on the election date (which will be a deadline for the ballots to be returned, if you're mailing ballots to the members) and work back from that date. If you're not going to mail ballots to members and will simply vote with a show of hands, you'll need less preparation time, but for busy members, ballots mailed to homes or offices are much more convenient. You'll also get a better voter turnout, and reduce the chances that nonmembers may vote.

Following is a list of recommended milestones to include in your election calendar.

Three months before election:
- Appoint the election committee.
- Publish candidacy requirements and election rules.

Two months before election:
- Announce that nominations are being taken (often, nominations are made during the group's monthly meeting), the election date, and all other relevant dates.
- Set the deadline when nominations are due (often at the end of the group's monthly meeting).

- Set the deadline for nominations to be reviewed and approved by election committee.
- If you are going to print short candidate biographies or position statements on the ballots, set a deadline for these.

One month before election:
- Announce the names of the candidates at the group's main meeting or in your group's publication.
- If you wish, hold a "meet the candidates" period at your group's main meeting.
- Set a deadline when the ballot must go to the printer, and if applicable, when ballots must be mailed. Mailing ballots about three weeks before the election date should give the members plenty of time to return them.
- Set a date for vote tallying by the election committee on or after the election date.
- Set a deadline for notifying and confirming winning candidates.
- Set a date for announcing winning candidates to the general membership (usually at the next general meeting).

A Brief Word about Ballots

One quick word on the ballots themselves: If you can get all the candidates, statements, deadlines, and so on onto one sheet, and (if you're mailing ballots to members) you still have room for a mailing address and a place to put the stamp, you have solved half your problems. Multisheet ballots create problems: they're difficult to count, they're more costly to mail, and they're harder for members to return. You can get more information on several sheets, but in the long run, it's more trouble than it's worth. If you need more room on a single sheet, print on both sides.

You'll probably want to make sure your ballots include several elements. First, make sure that you include the deadline for returning the ballot. Also include an area for write-in candidates. A small blank area for members to write comments is very useful, for two reasons: The annual election is a good opportunity to get feedback about the group's direction, the executive board's performance, and so on. More importantly (to someone who has to count hundreds of ballots), a few words from a member breaks up the monotony of tallying votes. Finally, with the introduction of scanners for the Macintosh, it would be nifty to include pictures of the candidates near their name . . . but maybe I'm getting a little too exotic.

Finally, and most importantly, *review the ballot,* preferably with someone else on the election committee. Last year, I mistakenly left someone off of the ballot. Ballots were mailed out without this person's name, and he didn't have the opportunity to run. Luckily, he accepted my very contrite apology, continued to help the group, and plans to run again next year. Save yourself the grief and the possibility of losing a good officer and *double-check your ballot!*

Election Night

Once the campaigns wind up and the time has come to count the ayes and nays, you're pretty well finished. Expecting a large paragraph from me on "maintaining integrity and a businesslike atmosphere during the ballot-counting process"? Nah. Just double-check your count after you're finished and keep the original ballots together in case a recount is needed or you have any later inquiries. Other than that, enjoy. Ballot counting tends to be something of a party at dBUG. The election committee orders pizza, and we attempt to build suspense as the votes are tallied; predictions are made and shattered, and although we don't have a smoke-filled room, the committee tends to parody big-time politicos pretty well. It's fun, it's even exciting, and it makes the work of the previous months seem worthwhile.

Now all we need is a statistical package for predicting election results on the Macintosh . . . . ■

"Our 670-member group closed last year's books with $6000 in our account."

"Our bank account balance floats pretty close to $100 every month."

"In the past year, we spent about $1000 more than we took in . . . but we bought an SE. We're certainly not in this to make money!"

can to keep that person actively contributing to your group.

Staying in Financial Health

It costs a lot to run a User Group. Working from the ground up, a new User Group should forecast the cost of its services and structure a membership fee sufficient to deliver and expand these services.

Funding and financing. Most User Groups are funded primarily by member dues. Depending on the needs and services of the group, dues could range from $5 to $40. These monies are used to finance newsletter production, meeting space and equipment, promotional flyers and other materials, and special programs the group may choose to offer. They may pay for phone lines used for a BBS or an answering machine on a member-support hotline. Funds may also be used to purchase certain equipment or resources for use by the entire group.

Make sure you consider the impact of income—especially substantial income from sales and events—if you are seeking recognition as a tax-exempt entity.

The following formula should help you calculate the right amount to charge your members. Don't look at it as a precise

formula—just as a guideline to help you forecast expenses and the dues needed to offset them.

1. Add up your ongoing expenses. You can do this on a one-year or a per-month basis. Here are some examples of the expenses you should include:

- Newsletter production
- Mailing expense
- Phone lines
- Office supplies
- Meeting space
- Promotion and rentals

This number should be the total cost of your member services.

2. Project your income. Make sure you base them on the same period—annual or monthly—as your expenses.

- Monthly ad income
- Raffles
- Disk sales
- Other sales
- Training income
- Special programs

This amount is the income that will pay the costs of your services.

3. Subtract your projected expense from your projected income.

> Here are some fund-raising ideas for your group:
> - Disk sales (blank media or public-domain—PD)
> - PD disk sales at meetings or at local trade shows
> - ImageWriter ribbon reinking service
> - Training classes offered by the group
> - Sales of training booklets compiled by the group (including hints and tips)
> - Sales of advertising in the User Group newsletter

4. Divide by the estimated number of members to arrive at the approximate cost per member per month or year. Be sure that this last number is realistic to avoid charging too much or too little for group membership.

Planning for dues collection. There are two ways for User Groups to collect member dues: once a year or every month. If dues are collected monthly, the User Group will have to organize its database to show when each membership expires and conduct ongoing renewal drives. Many groups choose to renew all members at the same time each year, prorating the annual fees to cover the months between enrollment and annual renewal.

User Groups operating within corporations or government offices most likely receive funding or some financial support from that office. This funding typically comes from computer user support groups or even from internal recreational funds. Dues may or may not also be collected.

On campus, User Groups may be supported entirely through member dues or may be subsidized by campus computer centers or similar organizations. Interestingly, a growing number of campus groups receive some financial support from their local computer resellers. Even if your group is not affiliated with a school or other organization, you might explore such an option or look for support from elsewhere in your community.

One caveat to groups seeking IRS tax-exempt status: As a rule, the greater the profits gained, the harder it will be to qualify as a not-for-profit group. Furthermore, financial sponsorship by a

less-than-impartial third party might lead the IRS to consider your group a marketing arm of that entity. Be sure to carefully review the guide on tax-exempt status for User Groups (available through the Connection; call, write, or link your request).

Cost-cutting ideas. As a User Group, you may have some unique approaches to cost reduction. Your growing membership ranks may boast people with contacts in the printing industry or with access to auditoriums, church halls, or other such meeting space. Do you have a member in the mail-house business or a supporting dealer or two who can help you cut production or collation costs? It's worth using that great User Group spirit to help you minimize your expenses. Keep these opportunities in mind as you structure your programs.

Raising Money Through Special Events
User Group Dollars and Cents

by Steve Welsh,
President, MUG of Corvallis
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AppleLink: UG0205

This is *not* going to be an accounting or IRS report, so put your calculators away. I'll leave the number crunching to the professionals.

Just a joke, folks. Since CMUG does, of course, fly the flag of "Nonprofit Organization," we certainly have our doors wide open, so here goes.

Let's start with one of the most common of fund raisers: disk sales. A box of 10 double-sided disks costs the group $15 each when bought in large quantities. As with other imported items, pricing can fluctuate. CMUG sells a box of Sony disks for $17 to members. The frequent necessity for disks makes disks the most popular item sold by CMUG. Believe it or not, these are our most profitable item.

Ribbons, mouse pads, disk banks, and other items carried by CMUG hold roughly the same profit margin or less. The Disk of the Month (DOM), an 800K disk (or two 400K disks, if requested) full of selected public-domain and shareware items, is sold for $5.

Although one 800K disk costs the club about $1.50, there are other hidden costs in producing the DOM. Some of the items collected are downloaded from electronic bulletin board systems, which often

involves long-distance phone charges or on-line fees (such as the cost of AppleLink). Other sources of DOM material are other clubs and educational services; getting this material requires buying a few disks from the sources or mailing blank disks to them. These resource channels jump the average cost of producing the DOM to approximately $3.50. That leaves $1.50 profit for the group.

But we aren't through. Once a hefty collection of material is created, someone must spend a few hours sifting through the piles of programs, utilities, fonts, DAs, and so on. A catalog of previous DOMs is used as a checklist to prevent repeating items. At this point, one master DOM is ready. Making, labeling, and organizing the 40 to 50 copies that are brought to each general meeting takes at least 1-1/2 hours—all volunteer time. Believe me, the $1.50 is earned.

Raffle items, for the most part, are donated by software companies or CMUG members. The average retail value of the month-to-month raffle items total close to $600. We sell three tickets for $1, and sell an average of 40 ticket sets per month. Occasionally, CMUG needs to purchase a piece of software for the raffle. One purchase can negate one month's ticket sales, so, in the true sense, the raffle is held as a benefit to the club's members, not as a reliable money-maker.

The cost of contacting software companies for donations, product reviews, and information involves postage and phone charges. When someone joins CMUG, they pay either $24 for a one-

year membership or $18 for a student membership. An average of $15 from each membership goes toward producing the club's 20-plus page newsletter for the year. This leaves $3 to $9 income per member. The club's balance sheet can be anywhere from $400 to $1,000 in any given month. Fluctuations occur when disks and ribbons are bought in bulk, board members are reimbursed for expenses, and so on.

Special occasions create special expenses. For example, when Acius president Guy Kawasaki visited CMUG, we paid for his dinner that evening and reimbursed Ron Courtney, who chauffeured Kawasaki from the Eugene airport and back, for gas and mileage.

Another income event is Copy Night, which occurs two or three times a year. Members attend Copy Night at $5 a head and can copy public-domain software from the 90-megabyte club library to their hearts delight for three hours. Since attendance fluctuates according to the time of year, some Copy Nights provide an income, some do not (especially if CMUG had to rent a sizable room).

CMUG's financial report is typical of many other User Groups: head above water, but certainly not hydroplaning. Our monetary supply keeps us alive in our continuous effort to benefit our members with discount purchases, a quality newsletter, raffle items, current Macintosh information, and an active lifeline open to the rest of the Macintosh community. ∎

4

Connecting to Resources

No User Group can go it alone. A big key to User Group success is the effective use of resources already existing in our industry and our market. Apple is one of those resources, as are local dealers and large and small software developers. Other User Groups are key resources, as are electronic communications networks, industry publications, and industry events and shows.

The following pages point to a few of the resources that can support User Groups in their development efforts and member services. Working with these resources, we hope you'll find the connections you need to continue your support of members and your growth as a valued community or in-house support organization.

Joining the Apple User Group Connection

In September 1985, Apple invited 15 representative User Group leaders to Cupertino to ask them what Apple's relationship with User Groups should be. The Apple User Group Connection, which fosters Apple's information exchange with User Groups, was founded in response to that meeting.

The User Group Connection is dedicated to providing User Groups with the best possible exchange of information with Apple. It's also committed to building User Group awareness among all of the communities Apple serves: employees, dealers, developers, the press, and above all, end users.

At first, the Connection took a generalist approach, treating all User Groups as equal in product interest and type of member. But the types of groups on the Connection's roster changed notably during that first year. An increasing number of institutional groups—in corporations, government offices, and on college campuses—registered with the Connection. In response, Apple restructured the Connection, adding staff to develop resources and opportunities for User Groups in each interest area.
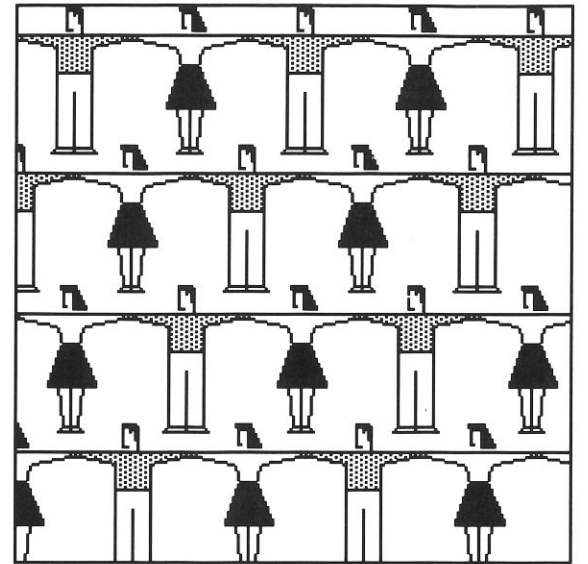
Communicating with Apple through a User Group Ambassador. Apple centralizes its communications with every User Group through one person: the User Group "Ambassador." This Ambassador is Apple's primary contact with the group—although Apple likes to hear from other members as well. Ideally, the Ambassador is the contact between the

Connection and the entire User Group, much as the Connection strives to be the contact between the User Group community and all of Apple.

Thus, the Ambassador facilitates the dissemination of information from Apple to the entire group. He or she must communicate with the group's officers and members, directing pertinent information to the newsletter editor, program planner, president, or other group managers. The Ambassador is also the person listed as the primary group contact in Apple's database, and his or her name may be mentioned as a contact for people who call Apple's 800 number looking for local User Groups.

Often, the Ambassador holds another volunteer position in the group—newsletter editor, president, meeting coordinator—but in a growing number of groups, this liaison position is one key volunteer's only responsibility.

Registering your User Group with Apple. Any active User Group serving an educational role in its community or interest area is welcome to join the Apple User Group Connection.

Registration is straightforward. A representative of the group simply completes an application package, which lists information about the group's members, services, product interests, and geographical and interest range. This information is reviewed by a Connection team to ensure

that the entity meets Apple's definition of a User Group.

Gaining the benefits of the Connection. When a User Group is accepted, it is added to Apple's database and begins to receive the benefits of being connected. These benefits include
- Inclusion in Apple's User Group database
- Referral of prospective members to the group via a toll-free number
- Monthly packages of communications
- Access to AppleLink, Apple's in-house electronic communication network
- Product announcements
- Participation in educational meetings at selected trade shows
- Information from third-party developers

plus other opportunities, depending on the geographic and interest area of the group. Further information about specific services follows.

Monthly mailings. Apple sends each registered User Group a monthly communications package. This package includes *Quick Connect*, Apple's newsletter to the User Group community, technical notes on Macintosh and Apple II products, *Tech Tidbits* (a collection of late-breaking product information and hints), general hardware and software updates, press releases, and other current information from Apple. A cover letter, included in each monthly mailing, details the contents of the package and how to use it for the benefit of the entire group.

This copy has been taken verbatim from the AppleLink User Group Bulletin Board. It shows what information User Groups can access when they tie into this on-line service.

Welcome to the Apple User Group bulletin board: a meeting place for User Groups and Apple to exchange information and ideas. We encourage you to share this information with other members of your User Group. To help you use the bulletin board, we've provided some information and guidelines below.

The bulletin board itself is organized as topic folders with subtopics. To find out more about these folders, just click your mouse and take a visit!

New Information. All documents and folders posted to the bulletin board appear here (and can be opened from here). They remain visible from this folder for two weeks, while they stay in their posted folder for two months.

National Professional Exchange. This new folder is the meeting place for the National Apple Professional Information Exchange, a group dedicated to the needs of corporate and government Apple users.

HyperCard. Apple's new software sensation: questions, comments, the Apple HyperCard User Group newsletter (Windoid), and plenty of stacks to share.

Apple Product Information Exchange
  Ask Apple: Apple II
  Ask Apple: Macintosh
  Tell Apple: Apple II
  Tell Apple: Macintosh
  Technical information

Meeting Support
  Apple speakers wanted
  Apple speakers available
  Success stories and ideas

User Group to User Group News
  The Dealer Connection
  Articles and reviews
  PD software exchange

Management aids and ideas
  Items of importance in starting and maintaining a User Group (including things like User Group bylaws, newsletter information, etc.)

General News
  Apple miscellaneous news

The User Group Connection Suggestion Box
  Miscellaneous news items
  Gossip column
  Messages to the Sysop
  Higher education news items

Developer Exchange
  Product information
  Ask the developers
  Developer speakers available
  Developer speakers wanted
  News and announcements

The Sysop, a member of the Apple User Group Connection team, will oversee bulletin board activities. Remember, documents and disk files will be removed if deemed inappropriate.

Enjoy the bulletin board. If you have suggestions or comments, post them to "Messages to the Sysop" (General News folder), or address them directly to USER.Groups. If you are having problems using the bulletin board, contact the AppleLink HelpLine (408) 974-3309. ∎

This letter also highlights upcoming programs or events of interest to the group.

Videos. Four times yearly, User Groups receive an Apple video featuring a variety of interesting updates. These videos can be shown at User Group meetings or shared by members of the group for viewing on their own time. Mailings frequently include product art, special publications, and other resource materials.

AppleLink. Many groups consider AppleLink the most important component of the User Group Connection. AppleLink is Apple's in-house communications network—a direct link among Apple employees, dealers, Value Added Resellers (VARs), developers, and Macintosh and Apple II User Groups around the world. AppleLink also ties User Groups into Apple's technical support databases, the MENU software directory, a bulletin board specifically for User Groups, and a multitude of other information resources.

AppleLink—Personal Edition offers similar services, but is available to any Apple owner. In a sense, it's a public version of the private, internal original AppleLink. Among the many forums on this network are Apple II discussion areas, Macintosh areas, public-domain software exchange boards, training centers, conference rooms, and much more. We strongly encourage your User Group members to take advantage of this service. Any Apple dealer has information on AppleLink—Personal Edition. Or you can contact us directly.

More than three hundred User Groups—for Apple II and Macintosh users—are currently on line with AppleLink and use the network to view machine-readable versions of Apple press releases, *Quick Connect* articles, technical resources, and more. Hundreds of local-access phone numbers across the country ensure that most users tie into AppleLink for the price of a local phone call.

Each User Group can have up to two AppleLink accounts, though most find one account sufficient. The AppleLink account is assigned to one contact within each User Group. This contact is responsible for maintaining the account and making it available as a resource for the entire group. Many groups appoint an AppleLink Ambassador specifically for this purpose. Average use per group falls between two and five hours per month.

> **Resources available on AppleLink and AppleLink—Personal Edition include technical support databases, product press releases, User Group information exchange forums, developer areas, and much more. Electronic mail exchange with Apple employees, including the staff of the User Group Connection, is also available.**

User Groups pay the lowest price available for using AppleLink—currently $6.25 per hour—if they use the system at off-peak hours (4 p.m. to 6 a.m. Pacific Standard Time, seven days a week). There is a minimum monthly charge of $12.50 per account.

For those rare occasions when a User Group may have to use the system during prime time, AppleLink is available, but—note well—at the rate all other users pay: currently $25 per hour. Obviously, nearly all User Groups confine their AppleLink activity to off-peak hours.

Technical assistance. The User Group Connection is staffed primarily by the types of people who join User Groups with questions, not answers. Thus, it's probably not your best resource for answers to 68020 RAM addressing questions, for example.

What the Connection staff is good at is helping User Groups as a community get answers on an ongoing basis. It supports User Group technical needs through AppleLink (using the same extensive technical databases used by Apple dealers and field technical support staff), through monthly technical updates, through the *Tech Tidbits* newsletter, and through

Apple-supported activity on the User Group bulletin board system connected via AppleLink.

These resources meet the technical support needs of most User Groups. There are times, however, when answers to specific questions may be needed. Groups

Through the AppleLink User Group BBS, User Groups can request Apple speakers for specific events. Also, Apple and developer employees can use this BBS area to post their own availability for speaking engagements. Apple is currently investigating ways in which AppleLink could become an even more effective mechanism for linking User Group events and Apple speakers.

Tips for securing speakers include allowing plenty of lead time and inviting local contacts. User Groups requesting Apple speakers are encouraged to allow at least two months lead time; some groups provide significantly more lead time, increasing their probability of finding an Apple speaker. A rapport with local Apple can also gain support of your programs and events. ∎

should place such questions on the AppleLink User Group BBS, where they can be responded to by knowledgeable users.

Trade shows and industry events. Mail and electronic communications are all just great, but there's really nothing like face-to-face discussions and events. Thus Apple makes a point of bringing User Group contacts together at major trade shows or other industry events.

Traditionally, the Connection hosts a breakfast meeting at the major Macintosh or Apple II shows (such as Macworld and AppleFest®). These meetings are announced on AppleLink and in the cover letter of the preceding month's communications package. As space allows, the Connection invites the participation of up to two members from any attending User Group.

The Connection also participates in formal and informal User Group functions at these trade shows. Macworld's Macintosh User Group Extravaganza (MUGE) programs and AppleFest's user conferences are examples. At some shows, the Connection organizes and staffs a special booth, where attendees can learn
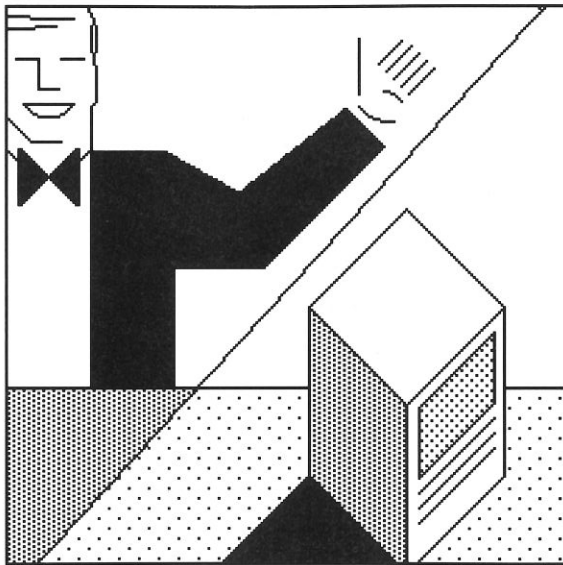
more about User Group activities.

Everyone in the Connection is vitally interested in knowing the members of the User Group community. Using these events to bring large groups of people together helps the Connection learn about User Group needs. The Connection strongly encourages User Groups to participate in Connection activities at major industry events.

Speakers. Speakers are the quintessential "can of worms" for the User Group Connection. There's nothing the Connection would rather do than get every Apple employee out on the road on a regular basis to talk about Apple and Apple products and to hear what User Groups are saying about Apple. In fact, there are few things Apple employees enjoy more than this beneficial exchange.

But when it comes right down to it, playing matchmaker between User Groups and Apple speakers is often a thankless task. Zeroing in on the right speaker is one challenge; getting speakers to make the time to take a trip is an even greater one. And some fundamental law of the universe states that the more critically an individual is needed at home, the more urgently he or she is sought as a User Group speaker. It just ain't fair.

For special events, such as when a new product is introduced, Apple makes every effort to send key engineers and spokespeople on tours of User Group meetings across the country. The Apple IIGS®, Macintosh SE and II, and HyperCard introductions each included such a road show. Because planning these

road shows requires so much communication, Apple generally centralizes all requests and responses through

need to build services and resources that benefit the entire group. Stringent approval criteria apply, including proof of ongoing, member-serving activity and references by a local Apple dealer or Apple representative.

User Groups interested in this option should send the Connection a brief explanation of their equipment needs, the member services they'd like to expand, and the reason why this equipment has not been purchased in the past. A full application package will then be sent for your completion.

"The sun is definitely shining on LAMG in the form of our new relationship with Sun Computers, Inc., a strong, reputable Apple retail chain. Our agreement calls for all the Sun stores to be the new homes for the LAMG public-domain library, which should be more convenient for everyone (be sure to take your LAMG membership ID card). Each of us will get a discount on any purchases we make. Moreover, Sun will pay for the first year's LAMG membership for anyone buying a Macintosh at any Sun location, which shows Sun's high opinion of us." ∎

Vicky Jo Varner
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AppleLink: UG0007

AppleLink. This obviously puts groups using AppleLink at an advantage, but at present, Apple has no better way to centralize the planning of these events.

Special purchases of Apple products for group use. Apple extends an option allowing established, legitimate User Groups to purchase single quantities of selected Apple II and Macintosh products at a discount. This option provides User Groups with access to the products they

The User Group Advisory Council. Once each year, Apple asks 15 User Group representatives to come to Cupertino to evaluate its program and suggest directions for the coming year. These representatives are selected for their leadership within the User Group world and for their ability to appropriately represent the many types of User Groups: groups that serve Apple II, Macintosh, national, community, educational, institutional, and home computing audiences. Council members serve for one, two, or three years, depending on the composition of the group as a whole.

Advisory Council representatives meet with the Apple staff for two days to share insights on the Connection program and Apple's presence in their groups. Results of the council are published in *Quick Connect*, and Apple regularly reports responses to council guidelines. Individuals interested in participating in the advisory council are encouraged to make their interest known over AppleLink or through contact at industry events.

Special support. The Connection is dedicated to building a great relationship with Apple User Groups. Sometimes, however, the confines of the Connection program don't allow Apple to provide all of the assistance a group is looking for, a situation as frustrating to Apple as it is to the group in need. The Connection is always open to ways to improve its program.

If a group really believes in an opportunity that the Connection is not currently supporting, let Apple know. The organization is willing to consider special cases and, possibly, making special provisions. If your group is genuinely doing something for the benefit of members and of Apple users at large and is doing it in a way that is supported by other User Groups, local dealers, and Apple people, the Connection wants to help. As with all communications, Apple prefers that requests for special consideration be made in writing, either via mail or AppleLink. You'd be surprised how many special requests are honored.

Dealer Tie-In

More and more groups are realizing the benefits of associating with a local dealership, and indeed, many dealerships are finding similar benefits in tying in with a User Group.

Dealers' and User Groups' perceptions of each other have evolved remarkably in recent months. As User Groups have gained more formal acceptance by Apple, and as their role in end-user assistance has developed, cooperation and creativity between these two important branches of the Apple family have increased.

Both new User Groups just starting out and established groups looking for new ideas can benefit greatly from an association with local dealers.

Dealers: A direct link to new members. Often successful User Group activity is linked to a supporting computer dealer or group of dealers operating in proximity to the User Group. User Groups are wise to cultivate mutually beneficial relations with local dealers, software resellers, and similar organizations. These organizations are virtually alive with potential User Group members: people with proven interest in computer products and with some need for support. If local resellers perceive your group as the positive, member-supporting, cooperative organization it should be, they will easily see the benefits of promoting your services to their customers.

User Groups and Dealers: A Valuable Connection

by John Moody
President, Quad Cities Apple Byters
Dealer Principal, Powell Computer Centers
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AppleLink: UG0058

Establishing a good relationship between your User Group and local dealers can be a great benefit to both parties. I would like to share a few ideas that can help you work more closely with the dealers in your area.

Part of the challenge is establishing a positive image. Many outsiders have a negative image of User Groups. Establishing the image of your User Group as a gathering of high-level users with interests in business, education, and home is one of my first suggestions. Many dealers shun User Groups because of their belief that these groups support the copying of commercial software. In fact, however, most groups take a clear stand against software piracy. Don't be afraid to share this information with your dealer. You may win a friend with that alone.

Remember that dealers are in business to make a living, and they have to work very hard to stay in business. Profit margins in the computer business are not as great as some customers may think, and overhead is rising. Training new salespeople to stay up to date with the ever-changing computer industry costs dealers both money and time. You must be aware of the problems of the computer sales business in order to establish good relations.

To develop a good relationship with dealers, first appoint a person in your group to be your dealer Ambassador, or dealer-relations manager. That person's job will be to communicate with the dealers in your area, keeping them apprised of the User Group's activities and reporting back to the group on happenings in the dealerships. Of course this person should have, or be willing to develop, a good understanding of the dealer's point of view, as well as be a champion of your User Group.
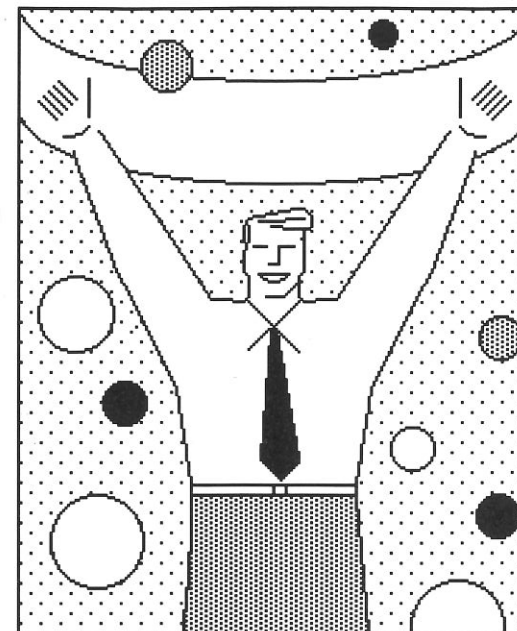
To get dealers involved, your Ambassador should know a little about sales. Like a salesperson, you must be able to sell your group to the dealer, to outline all of the features that make yours the best group around. What makes your group special? How many members do you have? Why do you want the dealer involved? Answer these questions and share your group's features with dealers.

As you make plans for your group that could involve dealers, have the Ambassador contact the dealers in your area to discuss the coming event. Plan something that will involve the dealer in a special way—something that makes a difference to the dealer. If you have a special speaker coming, plan some time in the day for that person to visit local dealers. The dealers and the group can then promote the visits and have people come by the dealership to talk to the speaker. This would also be a good time to get the dealer to give a door prize, letting the special guest do the drawing for the prize.

Both parties benefit from activities like this. The dealer gets traffic into the store and the names of all of the people that register for the door prize to add to a mailing list for direct mail. You get the promotion of your group—and, if you're lucky, a member of your group will win the door prize.

Another event that you can ask a dealer to sponsor is a group social gathering, such as a picnic or barbeque. To be admitted, group members must bring at least one person who does not own an Apple computer. Each person registers at the door as they come in for door prizes. The dealer should have computers set up for demonstation by members of the group.

You can then show your guest a computer without a high-pressured sales pitch from the dealer. The dealer will have the names of the attendees to follow up with after the event. The group gets an evening out, and the dealer gets to talk to a group of people already sold on Apple computers.

These events can work with groups of any size, though larger groups may want to get several dealers to sponsor activities. If some dealers do not want to participate in your area, don't worry; they may see later that they missed out and may help with future events.

As more and more dealers in your area see how working with User Groups can help them, you'll see how working with dealers can help your group. Don't be afraid to take the first step in establishing this potentially rewarding relationship. ■

How do dealers, campus bookstores, and other resellers work with User Groups? The answer is a long one, as these organizations are banding together in more and more ways. Generally, dealers and User Groups tend to align themselves informally, leaving each the freedom to interact with other similar organizations. For example, a dealer might have a relationship with several local User Groups, and a User Group might have connections with a handful of local dealers.

A growing number of dealers package User Group memberships into certain system configuration purchases. They make arrangements with the local User Group to purchase memberships and bundle them into a product configuration. Such packages are great sales features for the dealer and a way of diverting the often challenging explanations involved in getting a new user started. Bundled packages are also an excellent way of building interest in local User Group activity.

One well-established User Group, based in Arizona and focusing on Apple II and Macintosh users, has set up a creative, mutually beneficial arrangement with local dealers. One Saturday each month, this group offers "Boot Camp": a hand-holding and basic training session geared toward the first-time user. Local dealers send their customers by the score to Boot Camp, and the group just keeps signing up the members. Some local dealers help the group by giving memberships to their customers; others contribute equipment and door prizes for meetings. The Boot Camp concept has succeeded because it helps both the User Group and reseller—and, above all, the customer.
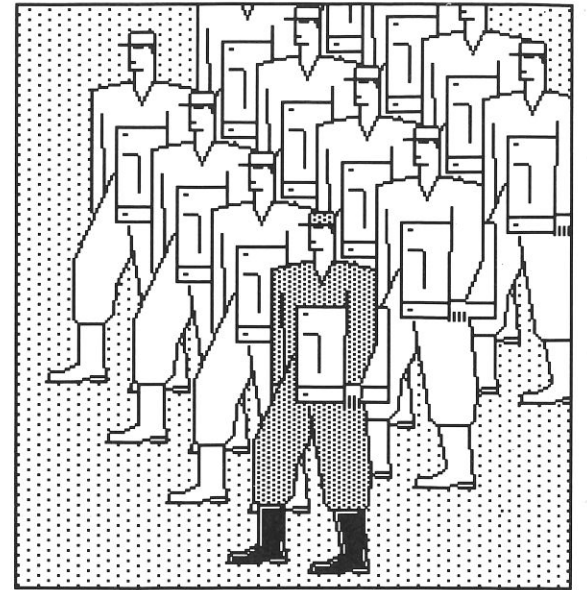
The "point of purchase" is among the most effective locations for selling User Group memberships. New computer owners are often more concerned about their ability to make their systems work than they like to admit. They may be too intimidated to tell the dealer that they really didn't understand what he or she just told them about getting started. A local dealer who believes in your organization, may be willing to tell new users about your group. This builds your

How to Get a Developer to Speak at Your Group

by Guy Kawasaki
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At the National Apple User Group Conference in Ann Arbor, I was on a panel about getting speakers for User Group meetings. A lot of good ideas came up, which I'd like to recap for you. This list reflects both what was discussed by the panel and some of my own thoughts.

Provide good background information with your invitation. Good information to include with your invitation is the size and purpose of your group, copies of your newsletter, a list of your members from large Macintosh sites (for example, Boeing, Hughes, and Arthur Young), and a list of past speakers (especially if the list includes the developer's competition).

Invite the right person from the company. Tell the developer that the presenter will be talking to a very astute, product-oriented crowd. Generally, you should warn developers not to send sales or marketing people and that the presenter should get right to the product demonstraton without presenting a lot of marketing hype.

Be flexible with your schedule. Try to change the meeting day and time to accommodate the existing travel plans of the speaker. This is difficult for large groups, but it will often make presentations to small groups possible.

Push the right hot buttons. Developers are more likely to accept speaking engagements if you push their "hot buttons." For example, emphasize how a presentation to your group can help them increase sales. A few other pitches that work are, "Your competition was here last month." "We'll give you a tour of the war room" (Pentagon MUG). "We'll take you around the warehouse and show you how cars are prepped" (Porsche Cars of North America User Group).

Get the speaker psyched. To get the speaker "psyched," send him or her copies of your newsletters and flyers that announce the speaker's visit. The speaker will see that you are making every effort to ensure the success of the presentation and will arrive all pumped up.

Make the speaker feel like a champ. Offer to pick up and drop off the speaker at the airport and arrange (but do not pay) for the hotel reservations. It's also a good idea to schedule a premeeting dinner with the officers of your group and a few major Apple customers. After the meeting, take the speaker out for a sampling of indigenous food.
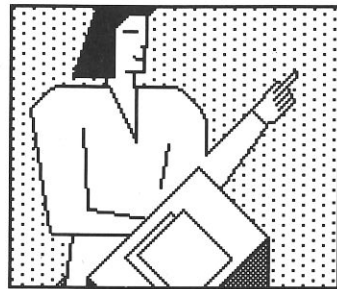
Fulfill the speaker's equipment needs. The biggest hassle for a speaker is bringing all the equipment necessary for a demonstration. You should provide a computer, a good projector, and an audio system. The speaker should need to bring only a hard disk. Be sure to get everything set up early!

Deliver a good audience. A good audience is a fresh, big one. Spend no more than half an hour on announcements and group business before the developer speaks, and feature only one speaker per meeting. A packed small room is preferable to a sparsely populated large room. One hundred people in a 125-seat room is better than 200 people in a 500-seat room.

Thank the speaker. After the meeting, send the speaker a thank you note. Also, send copies of your newsletter coverage of the event to demonstrate the enthusiasm that the visit generated.

If you do all these things, you'll get a steady flow of good demonstrations from developers. To get me to come to your group, all you have to do is tell me that Ashton-Tate is coming next month, pick me up at the airport, take me to a Ferrari dealer who uses Macintosh computers, provide a Macintosh II with a color projector, pack a small room, and feed me sushi. ∎

membership and provides additional support to the neophyte user.

Developer Tie-In

Apple encourages developers to establish their own connections with User Groups. In fact, an increasing number of developers are adding User Group outreach to their marketing and support plans. One of the best ways for User Groups to stay in contact with developers is through on-line communications, on public networks, local BBS discussion areas, or AppleLink's User Group–developer exchange bulletin board.

Although some User Groups feel that they are doing developers a massive favor by letting them address their members at a meeting, the most successful groups realize that for developers, their presence is a business activity, with commercial

The Guest Speaker

by Bill Holt
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AppleLink: D0331, Attn: Bill Holt

One of the many challenges facing officers of a User Group is lining up guest speakers from the software development community. There aren't any rules that one can adhere to, nor are there any guarantees that once a speaker is actually booked, he or she will show up at the meeting. I'm sure that those of you who have successfully lived through this ordeal are nodding your heads in agreement.

On the surface, the task appears to be quite simple. You call the company of your choice and inform them of who you are and who you represent, and they immediately agree to send their top developer on the date you select.

Ha! Remember "Murphy's Law," an axiom to live by when attempting this task. Having been the guest speaker at over six hundred User Groups, I do have a few suggestions that may preserve the integrity of that hard disk on top of your shoulders.

Most software companies have fewer employees than your group has members and so have few guest speakers to offer, and large software companies such as MicroSoft and Aldus require a minimum audience. Now what?

The answer: compromise and be flexible. Of course you want the speaker to be as technical as possible, but remember that software developers did not choose public speaking as a career, and most user issues are sales and marketing related. Compromise. A knowledgeable sales or marketing person may surprise you and do a great job! And if you are flexible and can identify, say, 40 software developers that you'd like to have speak at one of your meetings, you're bound to find some of them ready to accept your invitation.

The next step might be a little more difficult. Locate the member of your group who has the time and personality for the networking it takes to fill the calendar year: the individual in your group who sticks around after the meeting to discuss a few points with the visiting developer, the individual who attends local industry shows and seems to know everyone. Think hard; there's one in every group, and he or she is invaluable.

Another key to lining up speakers is assertion—which is not the same as aggression. The assertive caller realizes that he or she is competing with other User Groups and the firm's management for the developer's time. The caller must be aware that the "friendly squeaky wheel" will eventually get the desired results. The aggressive caller may get your group deleted from the visiting list faster than an "X" command.
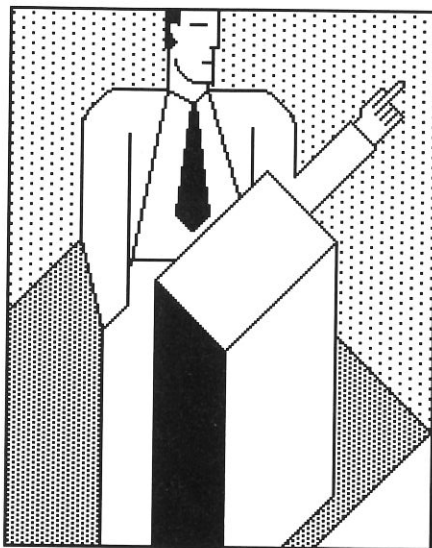
Your newsletter represents your group to the outside world and it often plays a role in a developer's decision to speak to your group. A well-written newsletter can offset the fact that your group doesn't have thousands of members.

Another way to get speakers who demand a minimum audience is to invite nearby User Groups to attend the presentation.

Also, some developers, like me, try to reach as many groups as possible; when they visit a large group, they like to arrange presentations to smaller groups in the area as well. Trade newsletters with other groups; if a speaker is in the area, you may convince him or her that a detour is in order.

Don't leave anything to chance. If you want the developer to provide literature and door prizes, advise the developer in advance. A developer who has committed his or her time wants the presentation to be a success, so don't be bashful. Assign someone in the group to be in charge, making sure that the necessary hardware is available, and that everything is in working order. Make sure that confirmation letters have been exchanged, and that everyone involved has the same information.

When, the big day finally arrives, and to your relief everything works out just fine, your job is still not done. Your guest speaker may be staying overnight and may not be looking forward to room service. Invite the speaker out with your officers, as it's the perfect time to get a commitment for next year and to ask for the names of other guest speakers on the circuit. It's a small world, and potential speakers cross paths all the time.

After reading this you may ask yourself if finding good speakers is worth all the trouble. Go down the check list: Do third-party presentations increase membership? Is this a great way to keep your members informed about upgrades and future product releases? Are third-party presentations entertaining? Anyone who has attended a User Group presentation by Guy Kawasaki (Acius), Carrie O'Loughlin (Brøderbund), Paula Markson (Epyx), and, I hope, Bill Holt (MediaGenic) will answer yes. ∎
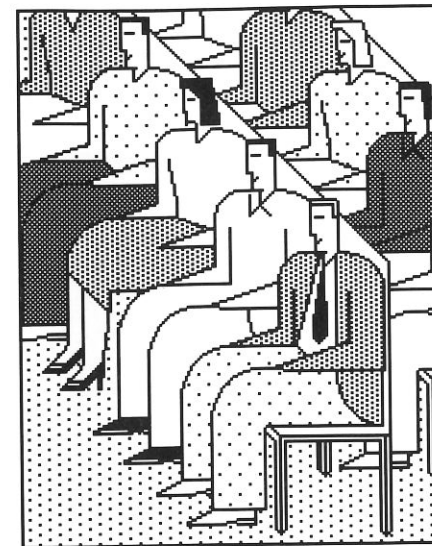
overtones and benefits. In fact, you should want developers to feel that way about your group: that your members are customers looking for the best products in a competitive environment. Addressing your User Group is the developer's opportunity to promote products, gain feedback about the company's own products and the competition, clarify product functions, and otherwise promote and support products.

If the speaker is technically oriented, it's also a chance to answer technical questions—but User Group members should respect the fact that not all developers can provide a highly technical speaker for each User Group event they support. Don't let the audience corner a speaker who is less than fully technically proficient. Developers will always think well of a User Group leader who offers to jot down some of the tougher questions for the speaker so that he or she can get the answers back at home base.

If the developer's presentation is reported in your User Group newsletter, be sure to send a copy of the newsletter, along with a short thank you note to the speaker. This is a great way of showing speakers the impact of their visits, and it helps them promote the benefits of their outreach to their management.

Many of the same tips that apply to dealer relations also apply to developers. User Groups and developers should work to establish long-term, cordial working relationships with one another. Most developers tell Apple that they want to work more with User Groups. Your professional, proactive approach to involving them in your meetings will go a long way toward making this happen. ∎

DEVELOPER TO SPEAK TONIGHT!

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Just Add Water

Published by Apple's User Group Connection, *Just Add Water* offers both new and established Apple II and Macintosh User Groups fresh insights and proven tips on developing and maintaining programs that successfully serve members' needs.

It also provides ideas User Groups can draw upon as they build member services and extend their reach into the dealer and developer communities. It includes advice on building a volunteer support force, recruiting new members, and working effectively with Apple Computer.

Just Add Water features the perspectives of dozens of successful User Groups as well as of developers, industry watchers, and others who recognize the importance of User Group activity. Applicable to traditional, community-based groups as well as to those affiliated with a company, government, or educational organization, *Just Add Water* answers many of the questions User Group leaders have about how to start and build their groups success.

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